

# TIME



## If He Wins

by  
ERIC CORTELLESA





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## Covering leaders



**We want our coverage of this campaign to help the world understand the candidates**

INTERVIEWING POLITICAL LEADERS HAS BEEN a staple of TIME's journalism for decades, as we report on the most influential people in the world and bring those insights to our readers. With six months to go until the U.S. presidential election, we want our coverage of this campaign to help the world and American voters understand what the candidates would do if elected. Today, Donald Trump is in a better position to win the White House than at any point in the previous two campaigns. TIME's Eric Cortellessa, who covers the Trump campaign, interviewed the former President twice in April to hear from Trump himself what a second term would look like.

Trump's ongoing trial in Manhattan and his upcoming legal battles elsewhere have drawn attention away from specific policy proposals and priorities for Candidate Trump. But those are ultimately what will define the nation's politics if he wins. We came away from our interviews with Trump and a dozen of his closest advisers and confidants with a clear understanding of an agenda that would reshape the presidency and American life.

So much about Trump can seem unchanged since he first announced his candidacy that it's easy to miss how much of the situation around him has been transformed. His campaign appears more cohesive than the one that propelled him to power in 2016. While the courts played a significant role in overturning some of Trump's efforts when he was in the White House, he and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell stocked the judiciary with hundreds of new judges who on the whole are more likely to rule in his favor than those they replaced. Trump tells us he "wouldn't feel good about" hiring someone for his Administration who admits Joe Biden won in 2020. Indeed, while the original members of the Trump Administration may not have been a Team of Rivals, many positions in the Administration as well as leading Trump White House figures originated from regions of the Republican Party other than his own. Trump tells us he won't be making that mistake again.

Trump has sat with TIME journalists regularly for extensive interviews since he

announced he was running for President in 2015. We believe these interviews—and deep reporting that places them in historical context—provide valuable guidance for our readers.

**LEADERSHIP, OF COURSE**, is not just a political phenomenon. For the past decade, with the support of our partners at Rolex, TIME has made a study of emerging leadership in all its many forms—statesmanship and intellectual achievement, cultural prominence and athletic triumph. The latest class of Next Generation Leaders, spanning eight countries and six continents, is no exception to that tradition of variety.

And yet amid such rich diversity, this cohort finds commonality in the way their leadership

is expressed. They embody resilience; Gazan poet Mosab Abu Toha tells us that "writing a poem is an act of resilience against forgetting." They are focused on building effective solutions to real problems, whether the impact of an aging population on Japan's economy or the lack of minority representation in competitive swimming. And they find joy at a time when that act can be its own kind of heroism.

Ncuti Gatwa, the Scottish actor on our Next Generation Leaders cover, is an expert at that last skill. At a pivotal moment for the beloved 61-year-old *Doctor Who* franchise, Gatwa this month becomes the first queer Black person to

step into the iconic Doctor's shoes. Gatwa hopes to be remembered as much for his take on the role as for breaking barriers, and he knows inhabiting this character carries weight. "Now I understand that something you've done might have touched someone's heart," he tells us, "or made them feel safe or less lonely."

In today's world, the importance of leading with heart is clearer than ever. TIME is pleased to continue to introduce readers to young people who are putting that truth into action.



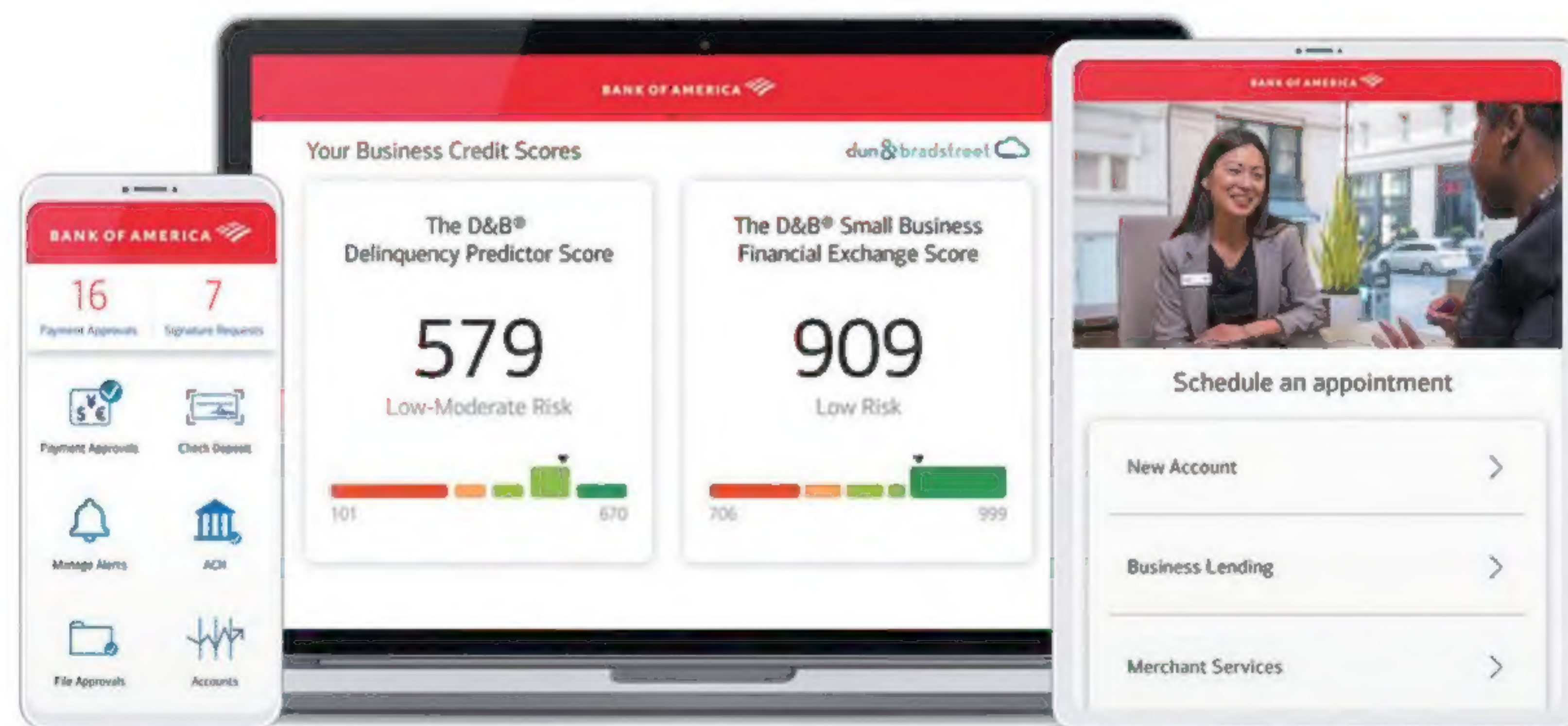
Trump being photographed at Mar-a-Lago in April

Sam Jacobs,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF





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## The TIME100 Gala

The gala celebrating TIME's 2024 list of the most influential people took place on April 25 at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. Honorees included, clockwise from top: pop star Dua Lipa; Oscar nominee Colman Domingo; Emmy Award winner Maya Rudolph; NFL quarterback Patrick Mahomes; (from left) Grammy Award-winning singer Kylie Minogue, Human Rights Campaign head Kelley Robinson, actor and singer Billy Porter; and actor Michael J. Fox. See the gala Sunday, May 12, at 10 p.m. E.T. on ABC, and later on Hulu. More at [time.com/summitgala2024](https://time.com/summitgala2024)



## On the covers



Photograph by Philip Montgomery for TIME



Photograph by Ruth Ossai for TIME



Photograph by James Schaap for the GW Hatchet

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## SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

In TIME100 Health (May 13) we mischaracterized AstraZeneca's greenhouse-gas emissions; they are down 68% since 2020. In addition, we misstated the amount Alaa Murabit has raised for the Beginnings Fund (it is \$300 million) and the amount Dan Doctoroff's Target ALS has raised (it is \$330 million since 2013).

## ROUNDTABLE

On April 26, ahead of the White House Correspondents Dinner, TIME hosted a TIME100 Talks panel about regulating AI. From left: political analysts Van Jones and Michael Allen, TIME CEO Jessica Sibley, Office of Management and Budget director Shalanda Young, and TIME's White House correspondent Brian Bennett.



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# The Brief

>  
**UCLA**

Pro-Palestinian supporters link arms while facing police officers in the early hours of May 2. Their encampment had been attacked by counterprotesters the day before.

*Joseph Crosby for  
the Daily Bruin*

## WHAT THEY SAW

Photographs by America's  
student journalists

REPORTING AND INTERVIEWS  
BY SANYA MANSOOR









## THE BRIEF OPENER

**A**MERICAN CAMPUSES HAVE not looked like this in more than 50 years, and never for the reasons they do now. The foreign war that students protested in the 1960s and '70s was one that, even amid draft deferments, threatened their own lives. What has stirred students to risk their safety, enrollment, and future careers on hundreds of campuses this spring is the deaths of others—the 34,000 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip since Israel launched its retaliation for the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that killed 1,200 and took 240 hostage.

The protesters' own point of reference is the 1980s campaign for divestment from apartheid South Africa. In their campaign, aimed at what they see as financial complicity in Israel's actions, the activists—many swathed in kaffiyehs and living in tents, if they haven't already been forced out by their universities—embody a generational divide previously visible only in polling: young Americans who have known Israel only during its occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza are more disposed to the Palestinian cause than are those old enough to remember it first fighting, in the shadow of the Holocaust, to create a safe place for the world's Jews.

This is the conflict that has thrust America's colleges back into position as the crucible in which the nation works out its moral questions. Student journalists have been the ones to document the resulting conflagration—especially on campuses that barred the professional press from bearing witness. *TIME* reached out to student photojournalists from across the country to tell this story. Find more of their work and words at [time.com/campus-protest](https://time.com/campus-protest)

—KARL VICK

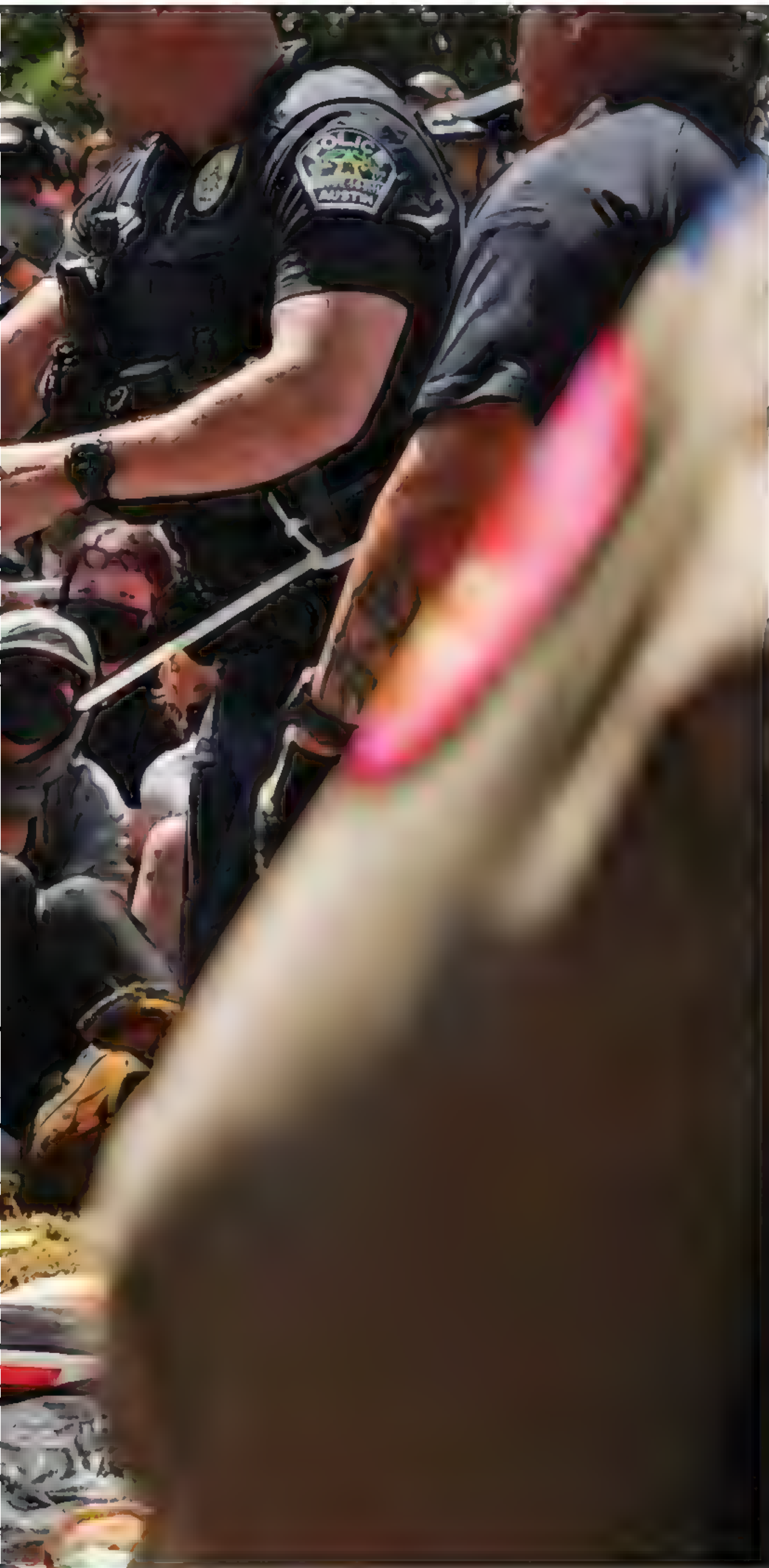
➤  
**GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

Protesters pray on Washington, D.C.'s H Street, as their fellow demonstrators form a perimeter around them.

*Tom Rath for the GW Hatchet*







**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**

Police grab a protester as they break up an encampment on campus on April 29.

*Lorianne Willett for the Daily Texan*



**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

Dawn breaks on April 23 over a section of the tent city set up on the university's Central Campus.

*Josh Sinha for the Michigan Daily*



**UCLA**

A counterprotester gestures to a bleeding injury while appealing to a security officer on April 28.

*Brandon Morquecho for the Daily Bruin*





< **UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**  
People pour liquid on a protester's face to help relieve the pain of getting pepper-sprayed, on April 29.  
*Charlotte Keene for the Daily Texan*

▼ **VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY**  
Students gather on March 27 outside Kirkland Hall, which was occupied during a protest; 27 participants were suspended.  
*Miguel Beristain for the Vanderbilt Hustler*





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<sup>1</sup> Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve.  
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## GOOD QUESTION

## Who is spending the most lobbying on AI policy?

BY WILL HENSHALL

IN NOVEMBER 2022, OPENAI RELEASED ITS WILDLY popular chatbot, ChatGPT. Six months later, leading AI researchers and industry executives signed a statement warning that “the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war.” Lawmakers around the world took notice, and as substantial federal AI legislation began to seem possible, lobbyists flooded the Capitol.

The number of groups lobbying the U.S. federal government on AI nearly tripled from 158 in 2022 to 451 in 2023, according to data from OpenSecrets, a nonprofit that tracks and publishes data on campaign finance and lobbying.

All organizations that carry out lobbying, the legal definition of which includes only directly discussing specific laws or regulations, are required to report how much they spent. However, this data is reported only as a total figure, meaning it’s impossible to know how much of this amount each organization is spending on AI-related lobbying specifically, vs. other policy issues.

Still, by this crude metric, Big Tech companies have vastly outspent the rest. In 2023, Amazon, Meta, Google parent company Alphabet, and Microsoft each spent more than \$10 million on lobbying, according to data provided by OpenSecrets. The Information Technology Industry Council, a trade association, spent \$2.7 million on lobbying. In comparison, civil-society group the Mozilla Foundation spent \$120,000 and AI-safety nonprofit the Center for AI Safety Action Fund spent \$80,000.

Given that the definition of lobbying includes only speaking with staffers about specific laws, these figures likely underestimate the amounts of money that tech companies are spending to influence lawmakers, says Hamza Chaudhry, a U.S. policy specialist at the Future of Life Institute, a nonprofit that focuses on risks posed by advanced technologies. “I would still say that civil society would be outspent by Big Tech by 5 to 1, 10 to 1,” he says.

Multiple sources tell TIME that the large amount spent by Big Tech companies has allowed them to build up a sophisticated lobbying apparatus—hiring more experienced lobbyists who better understand the technical details of their brief and have an extensive network on the Hill.

**WHAT EXACTLY** is the tech industry lobbying for? Some in the industry are against regulating AI, arguing that regulation would impede technological progress. But many of the companies involved in the development of AI have, at least in public, struck a cooperative tone when discussing potential regulation. Both newer AI firms and more established tech giants signed White House–organized voluntary commitments aimed at mitigating the risks posed by AI systems.

But in closed-door meetings with congressional offices, the same companies are often less supportive of certain regulatory approaches, according to multiple sources present in or familiar with such conversations. In particular, companies tend to advocate for very permissive or voluntary regulations.

“Anytime you want to make a tech company do something mandatory, they’re gonna push back on it,” said one congressional staffer, who was not authorized to speak on the record about lobbying discussions.

Others, however, maintain that while companies do sometimes try to promote their own interests at the expense of the public interest, most of

their efforts help to produce sensible legislation. “Most of the companies, when they engage, they’re trying to put their best foot forward in terms of making sure that we’re bolstering U.S. national security or bolstering U.S. economic competitiveness,” says Divyansh Kaushik, a vice president at D.C.-based advisory firm Beacon Global Strategies. “At the same time, obviously, the bottom line is important.”

Time is scant for Congress to pass an AI-related bill before the November presidential election, in which case the focus will shift to the 119th Congress, which convenes in Washington in January. The lobbyists are already there.

### ARTIFICIAL INFLUENCE

Number of organizations mentioning AI in lobbying disclosures



**‘Obviously, the bottom line is important.’**

—DIVYANSH KAUSHIK,  
BEACON GLOBAL  
STRATEGIES



**DIED**

► New York City writer **Paul Auster**, on April 30 at 77.  
 ► Crossword champ and New York *Times* puzzle tester **Nancy Schuster**, on April 26 at 90.

**RENAMED**

The **Boy Scouts of America** to the more inclusive Scouting America, on May 7.

**EXITED**

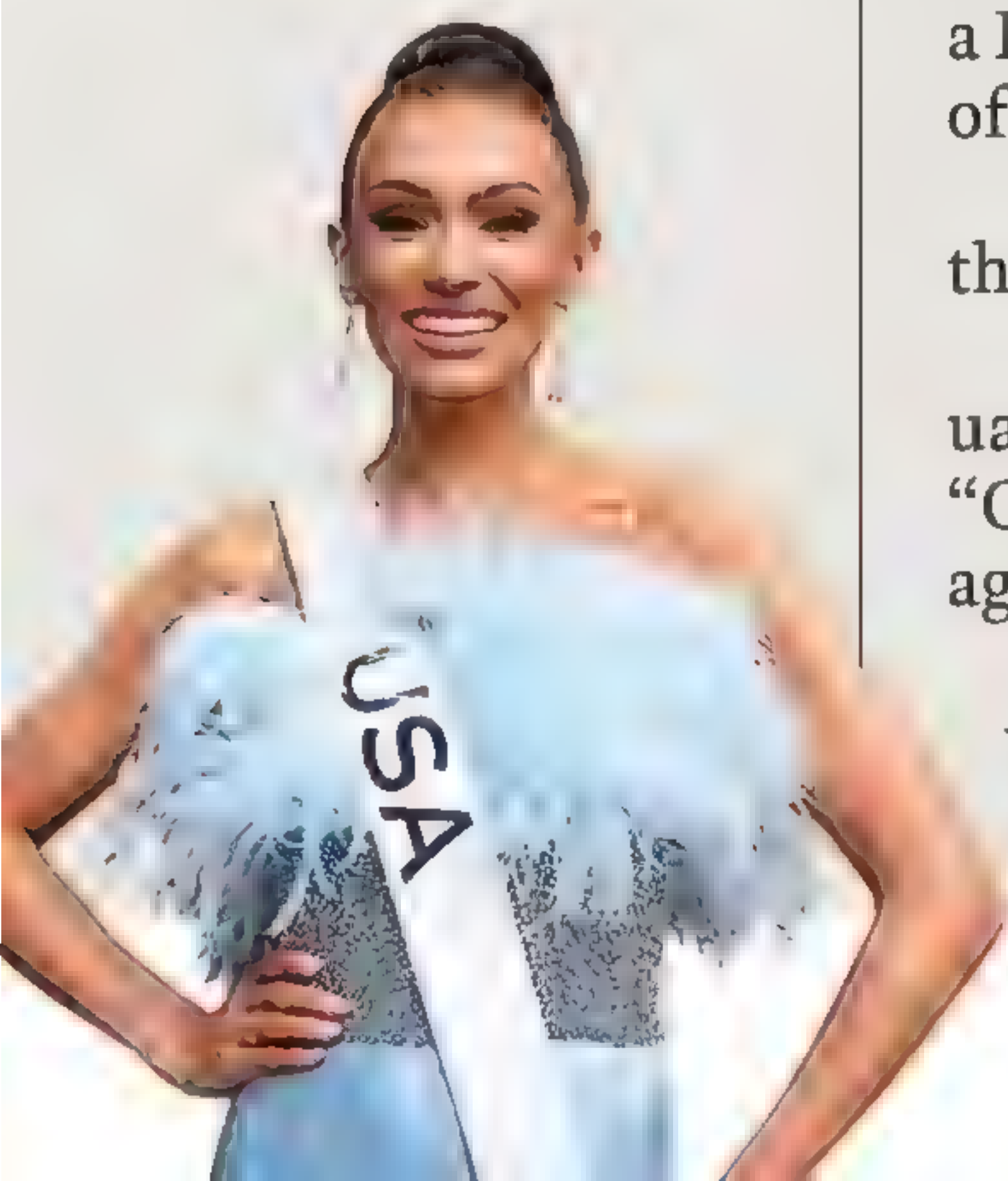
Twitter (now X) co-founder **Jack Dorsey** from the board of social network Bluesky, which he helped fund; he shared the news on X on May 4.

**ELIMINATED**

**Presidential elections in Togo**, with a new constitution announced May 6; it lets parliament choose the leader, and opponents say will enable President Faure Gnassingbé to extend his family's six-decade rule.

**RESIGNED**

**Miss USA, Noelia Voigt** (below), citing her mental health; the first letters of sentences in her May 6 resignation spelled "I AM SILENCED." Miss Teen USA, UmaSofia Srivastava, resigned two days later, saying her values no longer aligned with the organization. (Miss USA's CEO said it prioritizes participants' well-being.)

**INAUGURATED****Vladimir Putin***A fifth term for Russia's leader*

IN A LAVISH INAUGURATION CEREMONY IN THE GRAND KREMLIN Palace's Andreyevsky Hall, Vladimir Putin was sworn in on May 7 for a record-breaking fifth term as President of Russia. Putin took an oath of allegiance by placing his right hand on Russia's constitution. The ceremony—widely boycotted by Western diplomats following what election watchdogs called a sham vote in March—marked the start of a new six-year presidential term.

Putin claimed 87% of the vote in the three-day presidential election, having faced no credible opposition candidates. His most prominent opponent, Alexei Navalny, was found dead in an Arctic penal colony in February. Navalny's wife, exiled opposition leader Yulia Navalnaya, called Putin "a liar, a thief, and a murderer" in a video shared on the day of his swearing in.

"We are a united and great people, and together we will overcome all obstacles, we will bring to life everything we have planned. Together we will be victorious," Putin, 71, said in his inaugural speech.

Ceremony attendees included a range of government officials, from Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu to Steven Seagal, the American actor who became a Russian citizen in 2016 and was named a special representative of the Foreign Ministry charged with improving ties with the U.S.

The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were among the nations that boycotted the ceremony.

"Participation in Putin's inauguration is not acceptable for Lithuania." Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said. "Our priority remains support for Ukraine and its people fighting against Russian aggression."

The ceremony came a day after Russia ordered tactical nuclear-weapons drills, citing "provocative" statements by Western countries supporting Ukraine. —ARMANI SYED

**BANNED****Protest anthem***In Hong Kong*

"Glory to Hong Kong" became an unofficial protest anthem during pro-democracy protests in 2019. But on May 8, appeal-court judges ruled that Hong Kong's government can outlaw the song, overturning a High Court ruling last year that partially protected the anthem.

The appeal-court judges said the song, which includes lyrics such as "Liberate Hong Kong," had been used as a "weapon," making it dangerous to authorities if played in public settings. It can still be played for "academic" or "news" purposes, although it's been banned in schools since 2020.

Hong Kong is part of China but has had some autonomy since the British handover in 1997. The ruling was understood as another landmark in the erosion of freedom in Hong Kong in recent years, particularly since the passing of a controversial national-security law in 2020, which brought the city closer to Beijing's orbit.

—Anna Gordon





## Kate Cox wanted to be a mom of three. Instead, she's a reluctant abortion advocate

BY CHARLOTTE ALTER/DALLAS

IN THE TIDY BACKYARD OF KATE COX'S DALLAS-AREA home, there are two child-size lawn chairs alongside two toddler bicycles. There are two red-and-white stuffed horses in the playroom, and two sippy cups sitting in the sink. Everywhere you look, there are two of everything. The only problem is, there should be three.

Last year, Cox and her husband Justin were thrilled to learn that she was pregnant again. They had always planned to have a large family—three, maybe even four kids. When Cox saw the positive pregnancy test in August, she ran into the playroom to tell Justin, who was wrestling on the floor with their 3-year-old daughter and 18-month-old son. Justin immediately started considering whether they would need a bigger car; Kate was just excited.

But a few more weeks into her pregnancy, Cox got a phone call from her doctor. “She asked me if I was driving,” she recalls. “So I pulled the car over into an empty parking lot.” The doctor told her that the results of early screening tests indicated a risk of trisomy 18, a life-threatening genetic condition. “I cried for a while in the car,” Cox says. “In the same phone call, she told us that we were having a girl.”

It took weeks of additional testing and waiting before doctors confirmed the diagnosis. “Each time we had an ultrasound, there was more bad news,” Cox recalls, during an interview in her living room in early March. “By the end, sometimes I couldn’t look at the screen.”

Trisomy 18 is almost always a fatal condition. In rare cases, babies with milder forms of the disease can survive for years, but there were so many malformations to the fetus’s brain, spine, and neural tube that Cox’s doctor said the baby would probably die in utero. If she did survive birth, she would be placed directly into hospice care.

The months that followed were excruciating. People at the grocery store would smile at Cox and ask when she was due. Acquaintances would ask if she was having a baby shower. Her daughter didn’t understand that the new baby would not be coming home.

The diagnosis also put Cox’s own health and future fertility at risk. Her pregnancy was becoming increasingly complicated. She went to the emergency room several times for cramping and fluid in her birth canal. If the fetus died, Cox could get an infection. And because her first two deliveries had been C-sections, a third delivery carried increased risk of uterine rupture. If she continued the pregnancy, her doctor told her, she might never be able to have children again. “The more C-sections you have, the more risk of hysterectomy, hemorrhage, uterine rupture,” says Damla Karsan, Cox’s ob-gyn.

Given her medical history, Kate and Justin decided to terminate the pregnancy. “We wanted our baby so badly,” Cox says. “But we didn’t want her to suffer, and the risks to me were too high. I also have two other babies, and they need their mommy. I had to make a decision with all of my babies in mind.”

But abortion is illegal in her state in all but the most urgent medical situations. Cox’s physician told her that because the fetus still had a heartbeat, Cox probably did not qualify for a medical exception. “I couldn’t believe that I wouldn’t qualify, given the risk I faced in my pregnancy. My baby was not going to live,” she says, pausing to wipe away tears. “I wanted to be able to come home and hug my babies, and be close to my mom, and be able to cry on my own pillow.”

The law did not make that possible. So instead of becoming a mother of three, Kate Cox has become an unlikely national figure—the first pregnant woman in the midst of a health crisis to sue for the right to an abortion since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. Now, Cox is a reluctant advocate for reproductive rights, and the most prominent example of how abortion bans can endanger even women who desperately want to be mothers.

**‘Sometimes  
prayed-  
for, wanted  
pregnancies  
end in  
abortion.  
It’s medical  
care.’**

**BEFORE THIS ORDEAL**, Kate and Justin Cox had never thought much about abortion. “I just didn’t think it was going to be something that would ever be in my life,” Cox says, sitting at her kitchen table underneath a big print of a Madonna and Child. Kate and Justin say they have not been regular voters, and don’t necessarily identify with either political party. Between raising two toddlers and working full-time jobs (Justin’s in IT; Kate works at a nonprofit), they didn’t pay much attention to the news. When the Supreme Court upended America’s abortion landscape, it didn’t seem to matter very much to their lives. When Texas’ strict abortion ban went into effect shortly after, they both assumed that there would be medical exceptions. When Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton warned that doctors





▲  
*Cox at home  
with her two  
young children*

who provided abortions could be held criminally liable, the news barely registered. But when Cox's doctor told her that she couldn't get an abortion in Texas, Cox started googling to learn more about the state law. That's how she came across the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), a legal-advocacy organization that had filed a lawsuit, *Zurawski v. Texas*, to clarify the scope of the state's "medical emergency" exception to its abortion ban.

Cox sent a cold email to CRR, and was connected to Molly Duane, a senior staff attorney who is the lead lawyer on the *Zurawski* case. She agreed to represent Cox. "What Kate Cox's case shows is that this argument of the states that they have exceptions to their blanket abortion bans for the health of the woman is false," says CRR president Nancy Northup. "They don't have exceptions, and they won't allow exceptions to be applied."

On Dec. 7, a Texas judge granted Cox a temporary restraining order, allowing her to terminate her pregnancy and shielding her doctors from prosecution under Texas law. But almost immediately, Paxton petitioned the Texas Supreme Court to halt that order, and threatened local hospitals with legal action if they allowed the abortion to proceed.

At that point, Cox was roughly 20 weeks pregnant. She and Justin decided they couldn't wait any longer. They traveled to New Mexico and ended her pregnancy on Dec. 12. Before the termination, they named the baby Chloe Jones. Her middle name was after Cox's grandfather, she says, "so that way she would know who to look for in heaven."

**ALTHOUGH COX DID NOT** want an abortion, she says she is "grateful" she was able to get one. "The alternative would have been worse," she says. "I didn't want to have to wait until my baby died in my belly, or died during birth, or have to hold her in my arms as she suffocates or has a heart attack."

The experience has opened the Coxes' eyes to the ways their family could be affected by laws that seemed to have little to do with them. "As a nation we have a lot to learn about abortion," says Cox. "Sometimes prayed-for, wanted pregnancies end in abortion. It's medical care."

A few weeks after her abortion, Cox got a call from the White House. "I actually had my son on my hip, and he had peed through his diaper all down my side," she says, laughing for the first time since our conversation began. "I certainly never thought I would get an opportunity to speak to the President. If I did, I didn't think it would be with pee down my side." The President and First Lady invited her to sit in the First Lady's box at the President's State of the Union on March 7.

Both Coxes now say that they are committed to voting in every election, and that abortion access is their top issue. "If you are pregnant, if you love someone that is pregnant, if you may become pregnant," Cox says, "you have to vote like your life depends on it." □



## 5 compliments that land every time

BY ANGELA HAUPT

COMPLIMENTS BENEFIT BOTH the giver and the receiver, but people tend to underestimate their impact. As a result, we don't give as many as we should. "The compliment is one of these really powerful, small actions that brighten your day and brighten someone else's day," says Xuan Zhao, a behavioral scientist at Stanford University who's the CEO and co-founder of the well-being startup Flourish Science. "And it costs nothing."

Why is a compliment so transformative? One of the most important things to humans is to feel valued and respected by others, and like we belong, says Vanessa Bohns, a social psychologist and professor of organizational behavior at Cornell University, who has researched compliments. "We're always attuned to any scraps of information we get about how we're viewed by other people," she says, but rarely do we receive any. "When we get a compliment, it gives us that feedback we want to know so badly about what other people think of us." An expression of admiration provides a "sliver of hope" that we're viewed positively in some realm, she adds, like work or fashion—which activates the reward center of the brain and bolsters our spirits. According to Bohns' research, people feel "significantly better" after both giving and receiving a compliment, compared with how they felt beforehand. (If you find accepting kind words awkward, experts suggest smiling with a simple "Thanks, that means a lot.")

With that in mind, we asked experts to share some of their favorite compliments—and why they resonate.

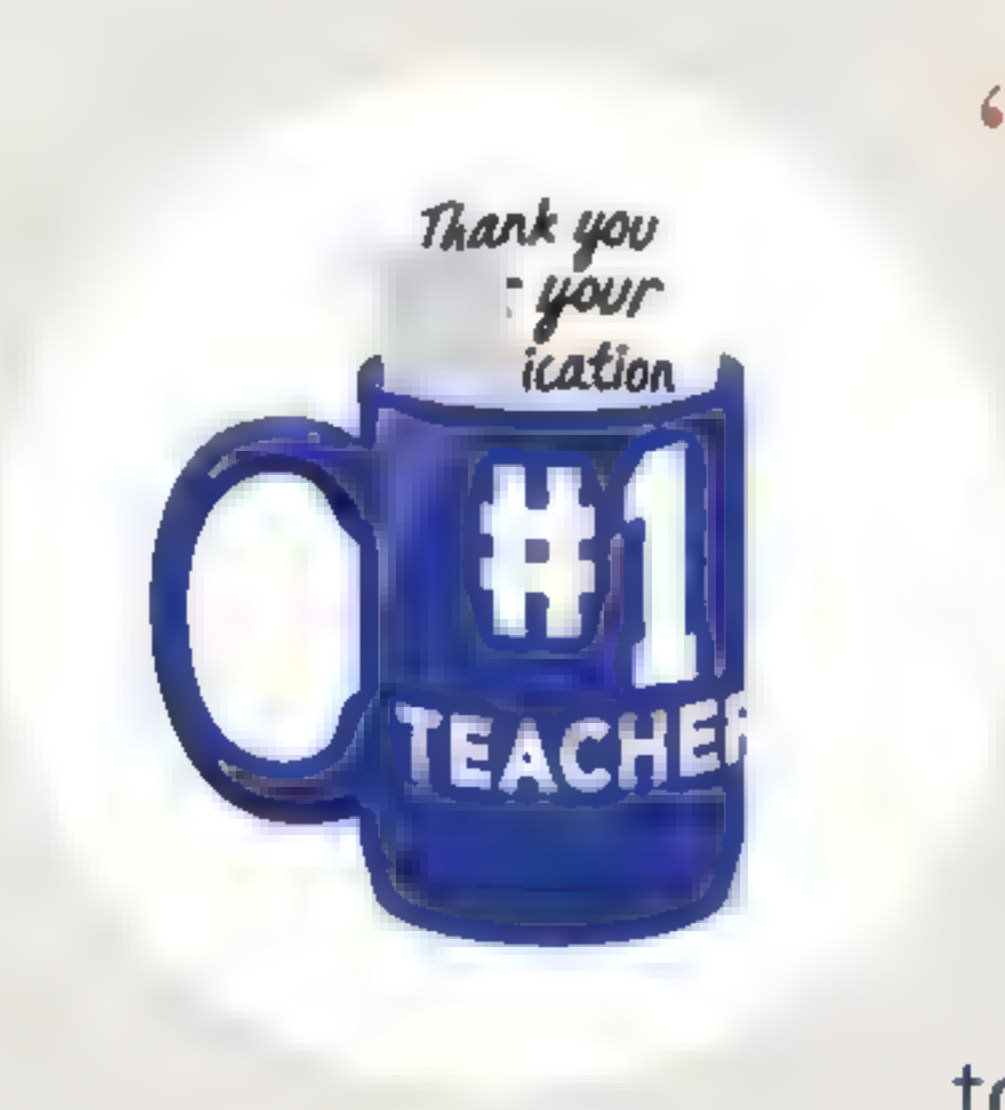
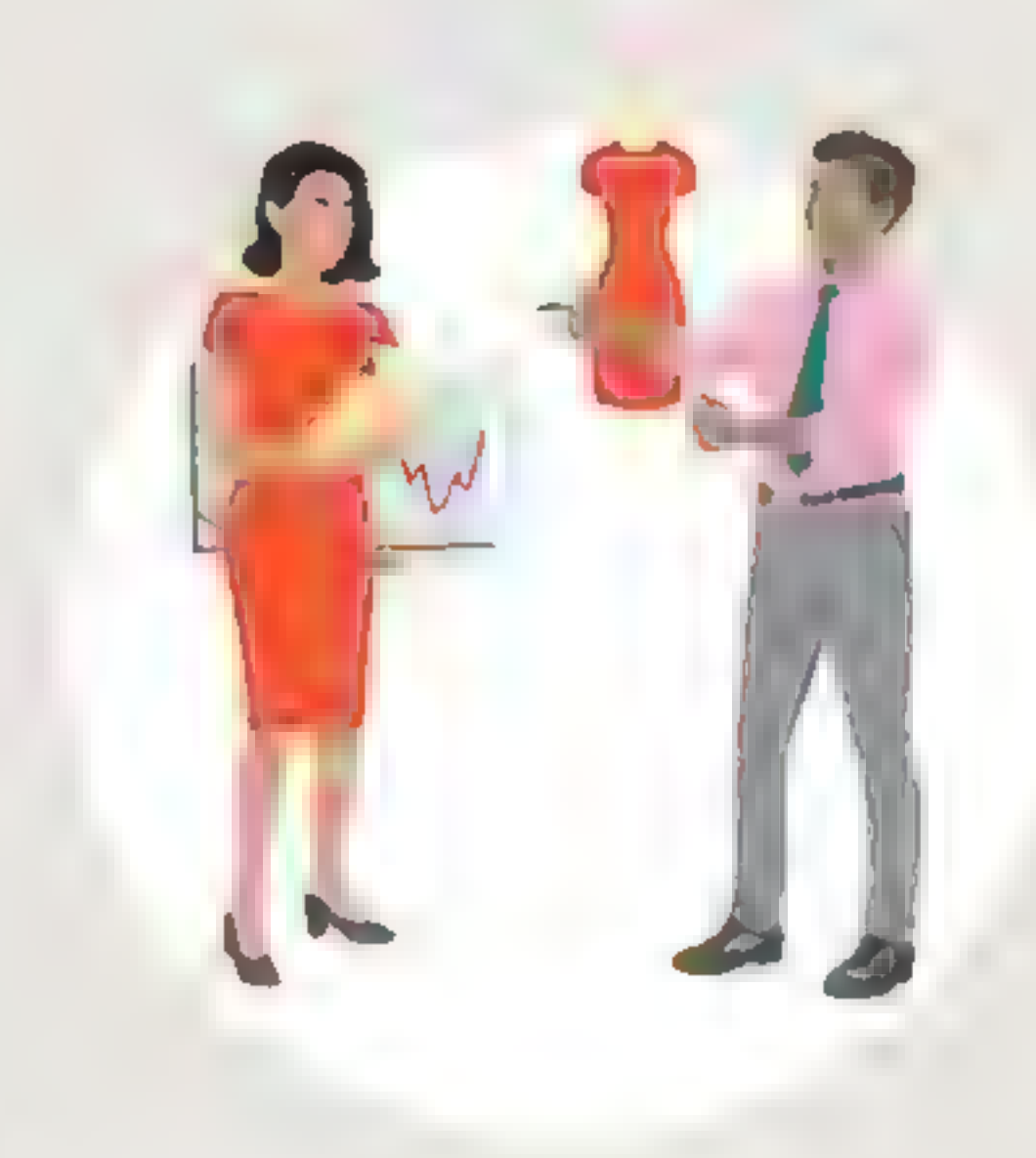


### "You handled that situation so well."

Bohns recently used her favorite compliment when she saw a server navigate a difficult interaction with a customer at the bar. "I like it so much because you use it in fraught moments where the other person is often unsure of whether they handled a situation OK," she says. "It reassures the person that they did and shows them that their efforts to defuse a situation or help someone out have not gone unnoticed."

### "I'm really impressed with your ability to work under pressure."

Respect is essential when delivering compliments. Most women can recall "compliments" that didn't help—think catcalling and other unwanted remarks about physical appearance. "These aren't really compliments because they aren't showing respect," Bohns says. Before you say something nice to someone, make sure you're doing so in a thoughtful, appropriate way. If a colleague has just finished an impressive work presentation, for example, compliment her competence, not her looks.

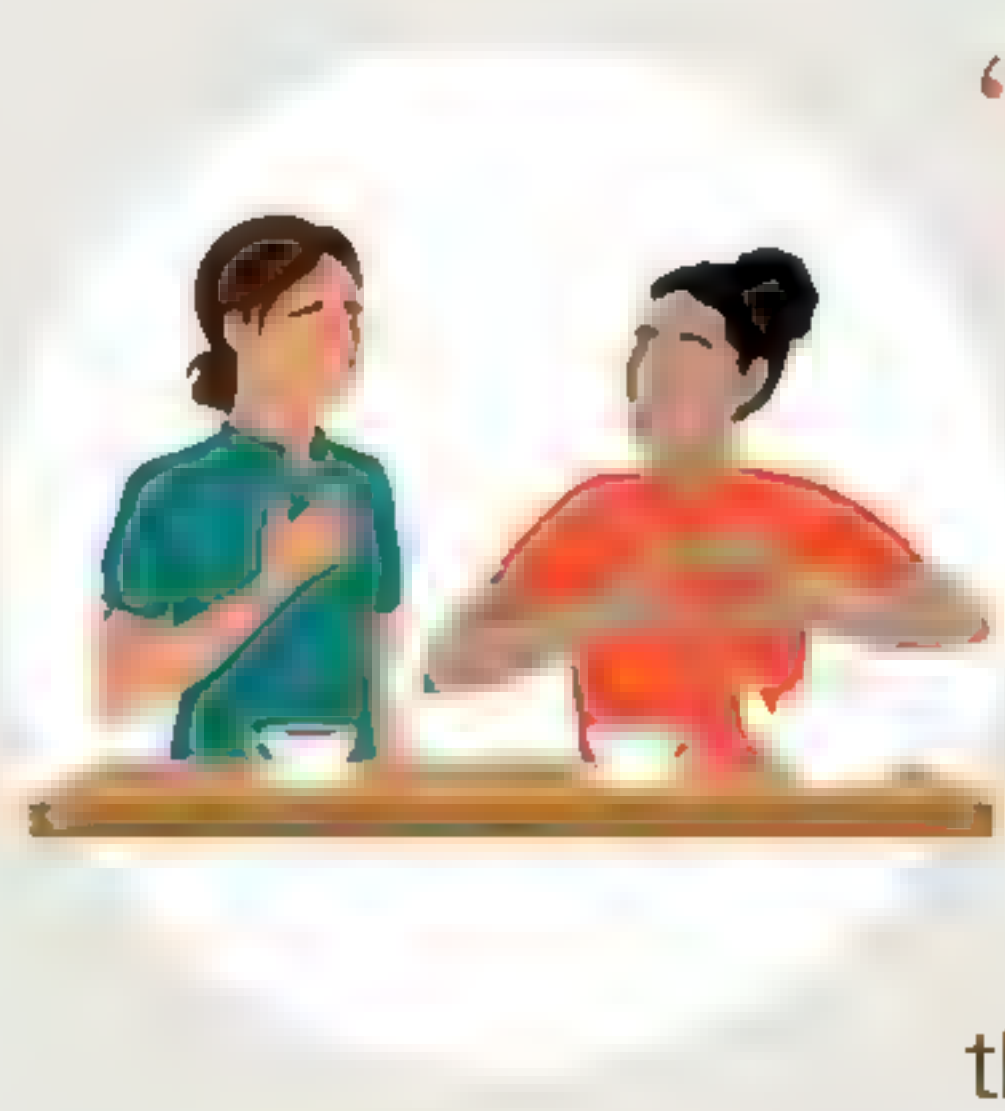


### "I love the way you bring out the best in people."

Be specific. Details can elevate a so-so compliment to a great one, so make it a point to highlight specific qualities or actions. Zhao likes this one because "it acknowledges an individual's willingness, effort, and growth mindset in recognizing and cultivating the potential in others—often before these individuals see it in themselves," she says. "This is high praise for anyone seeking to make a positive impact, such as a leader or a teacher."

### "Hey, great earrings!"

Feel free to compliment strangers. In Bohns' research, students on a college campus were told to approach a stranger of the same gender and compliment them—about, for example, their nice shirt. The study participants were asked to guess how good the compliment would make the other person feel, and it turned out they underestimated the positive effect—while overestimating how annoying it would be to be stopped by a stranger. "Across all contexts, it makes people feel better than we expect," Bohns says.



### "You make even ordinary moments feel extraordinary."

This compliment—one of Zhao's favorites—works well among romantic partners and close family members. "It's a beautiful and profound way to highlight how their presence turns life into something meaningful and worthwhile, despite mundane routines and the ordinariness of our everyday lives," she says. If you're afraid that giving a compliment like this might feel weird, you're not alone. We tend to be overly concerned about how to give a compliment competently—like if we don't word our kind words perfectly, we'll be laughed at. But as long as you genuinely mean what you're saying, both of you will leave the interaction happier.

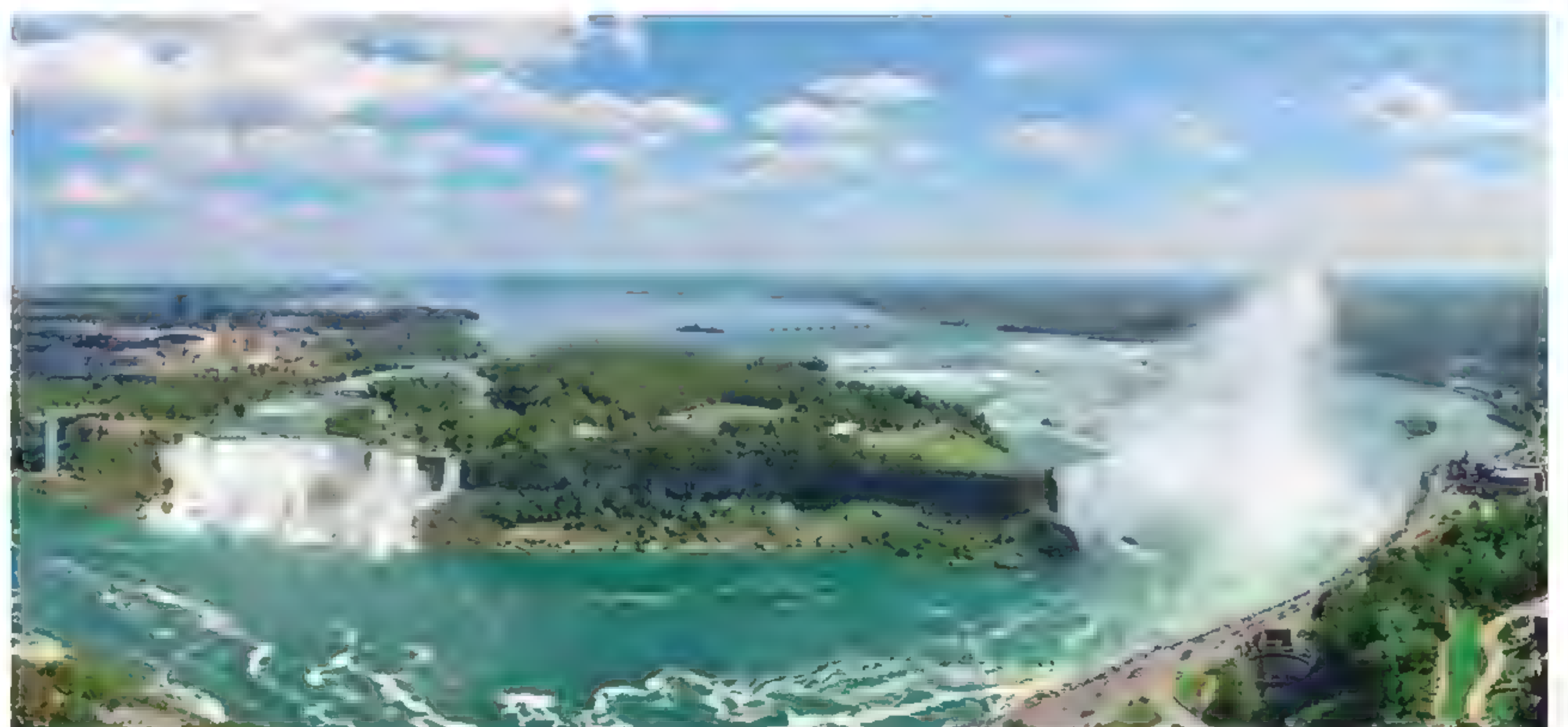




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# The View

WORLD

## HOW TO WIN COLD WAR II

BY DMITRI ALPEROVITCH

Both President Joe Biden and Xi Jinping strongly reject the current U.S.-China competition as a new Cold War. As recently as September, Biden said that he doesn't "want to contain China" and that "we're all better off if China does well." Xi, in turn, proclaimed that "China doesn't want a cold war or a hot war with anyone," following a meeting between the two in November. But these pronouncements aren't sincere. ▶

INSIDE

HOW FRANCE COULD TAKE  
A TURN TO THE RIGHT

IN A WORLD OF DOG SHOWS,  
LEARNING TO LOVE MUTTS

THE CASE FOR WARNINGS  
ON SUGARY FOODS



Today there are striking and troubling similarities between our current moment and the original Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union that defined the second half of the 20th century. Once again, the world is witnessing two major powers engaged in a global competition for supremacy, trying to lock in an economic, technological, diplomatic, and military advantage anywhere and everywhere. Virtually every region of the planet is a battlefield for this confrontation: from the scramble to secure mining rights for critical minerals and advantageous trade deals in Africa and Latin America, to the establishment of economic and military partnerships across Asia, to backing opposite warring sides in Europe and the Middle East.

And just as in the 20th century, the past two decades have witnessed a dangerous conventional and nuclear arms race, with China engaging in rapid buildup and modernization of its nuclear, naval, air, ground, and rocket forces. In an unmistakable nod to the space race of the 1960s, this contest is also playing out beyond earth, as both countries race to once again place a human on the moon in the space of a decade, and later Mars. Finally, the coldness of the original Cold War was defined most of all on a daily basis by the secret espionage war. And today once again America is confronted with an espionage threat against its government and industry on a scale heretofore not seen.

The current era is not identical to the prior Cold War. That is most clear in the deep economic interdependence between China and the U.S. Both China and the U.S. also believe that the two countries are here to stay. Their current goals are not destruction of each other's systems but a competition for influence around the world, especially in the Indo-Pacific. Neither believes that this struggle is existential as it was in Cold War I. Rather, it is a fight over who controls the economic levers and has more influence in global institutions of the 21st century.

But as in the prior Cold War, there are considerable risks of a hot conflict breaking out. That is especially the case over Taiwan. China is already



closing in on attaining the capability to conquer Taiwan by force—the U.S. intelligence community has determined that Xi had issued a deadline to his military to be ready for this war by 2027. Biden has publicly stated on at least four separate occasions that he would order American troops to defend Taiwan against an invasion. The world faces an abyss if this were to happen.

**EVERY PASSING MONTH** makes clear that confronting the reality of China's threat to the U.S.-led global order requires a deep, hard strategic look. Just as it was in Cold War I, time is on America's side in Cold War II. But it must be used wisely.

In practical terms, that means strengthening America's critical advantages and the Western alliance while deterring a calamitous war with China. This requires staying ahead in the military domain as well as in semiconductors and other key technologies. On top of that, the U.S. must invest in talent-based immigration that will help offset China's numerical advantages. Left to their own devices, China's systemic challenges—from a slumping economy to a shrinking population—will make its bid to

become the world's most powerful nation much less realizable.

The U.S. must also pursue a strategy of unidirectional entanglement. That means increasing China's dependence on U.S. supply chains while doing the opposite with America's. Beating China also requires Washington to reframe its engagement with lesser adversaries like Russia, North Korea, and Iran and to view our work with allies, and partners like India and Vietnam, through that same lens.

There would be a substantial reduction in tension and a much smaller risk of outright war if China were ultimately convinced that it is better off working within the current U.S.-led international order. But Washington mustn't count on that happening.

Over 2,000 years ago, amid the Third Punic War between Rome and Carthage, Cato the Elder used to finish his speeches before the Roman Senate with his rallying cry, "Carthage must be destroyed." Today, the U.S. rallying cry must be *Sinae deterrendae sunt*. China must be deterred.

*Alperovitch is a national-security expert and author of a new book, World on the Brink: How America Can Beat China in the Race for the Twenty-First Century*



## Prime Minister Marine Le Pen?



AS THE E.U. MOVES toward parliamentary elections in June, Europe's populist right is having a moment. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has defied predictions of a short tenure. In Spain, political attacks on Socialist Party Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and his wife have created turmoil. The right has also made gains in the Netherlands and Portugal.

But the biggest fear for those dreading a possible far-right surge across Europe has long been the arrival on France's center stage of anti-immigrant icon Marine Le Pen and her National Rally (RN) party. The RN's double-digit lead over President Emmanuel Macron's Renew alliance in the June contest signals that inflation, years of unpopular reform plans, and general voter fatigue are upstaging Macron's aggressive efforts to tie Le Pen's party to Russia's Vladimir Putin. (Years ago, the RN accepted a loan from a Russian bank.)

**IN THE PAST,** French voters have balked at lifting Le Pen or her father Jean-Marie Le Pen, who founded the RN's precursor, to national prominence. European Parliament elections have little direct impact on France's government, but they offer voters a chance to protest Macron, and a large enough RN landslide in June could force parliamentary elections in France—perhaps even ushering in Le Pen as Prime Minister.

How would that happen? It would likely begin with a successful

censure motion against the government of Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, a Macron ally, in France's National Assembly this summer. A motion led by the center-right Republicans would draw support from across the political spectrum and could provide the 289 "yes" votes needed to force new elections.

If "yes" carried the day, Macron would almost certainly try to regain political momentum by delaying



*Marine Le Pen at the French National Assembly she conceivably could lead*

parliamentary elections until the fall—picking a new Prime Minister, who wouldn't be required by France's constitution to seek a confidence vote. But the pressure for a vote would only grow and new censure motions would likely follow, leaving Macron little choice but to dissolve the National Assembly and give the opposition the elections it wants. Current surveys show that given the chance, Le Pen's RN might well cut deeply enough into the seat share of Macron's alliance to force the President to choose an RN Prime Minister, maybe even Le Pen herself.

For Le Pen, France's perennial protest candidate, it won't be easy. A French election campaign will be different than a race for seats in the European Parliament. Moderate voters might rally to block Le Pen if she's seen as a possible Prime Minister. And, unlike in the European vote, France holds two-round legislative elections, minimizing the influence of parties seen as extreme, like RN.

But if Le Pen overcomes these steep obstacles to win a majority or even just the largest number of seats in France's Parliament, she would transform the country's politics.

Under the French constitution, the President has special responsibilities for Europe, foreign affairs, and defense, but a Prime Minister with a parliamentary majority can lead on domestic policy. Le Pen has said she favors withholding part of France's financial contribution to the E.U. and would adopt policies that conflict with bloc rules on the single market and migration. She might also try to block or minimize French aid to Ukraine. In any of these cases, France's turmoil would produce aftershocks across Europe and leave policymakers scrambling for answers.

A Le Pen premiership, if deftly handled, could boost her chance of becoming President later on. (She already saw her vote share jump from 34% in the 2017 presidential contest to 41% in the 2022 one.) The next vote for the top job isn't until 2027, giving her critics, in France and beyond, plenty of time to worry. □





< Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, playing a waiting game



## CO<sub>2</sub> Leadership Brief

By Justin Worland

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

ON MAY 1, FEDERAL RESERVE CHAIR Jerome Powell offered a two-part message to eager interest-rate watchers. The Fed is unlikely to increase interest rates this year, but policymakers there are also not rushing to bring them below 5.25%–5.5%. “I don’t know how long it’ll take,” Powell said of when the Fed might cut rates.

Interest rates shape markets, and that’s especially true with renewable energy. Clean-energy projects are cheaper to run than their fossil-fuel counterparts because they don’t require operators to continually purchase fuel. But they typically have high up-front costs. As a result, the price of clean energy is determined to a significant extent by the cost of the debt that developers take on when they first build projects.

Energy experts sometimes refer to what they call the levelized cost of electricity, or LCOE, to compare the cost of generating electricity over the lifetime of different facilities or energy sources. That figure incorporates all the different costs associated with building and operating a plant, from development to decommissioning. An April

analysis from the research and consulting firm Wood Mackenzie found that a 2-percentage-point interest-rate increase would lead to as much as a 20% spike in the LCOE for renewables. Power plants running on natural gas face only a 11% increase in the LCOE under the same interest-rate conditions.

At the same time, large oil and gas companies have enjoyed record profits over the past several years, giving firms deep pockets and leaving them less reliant on debt to finance projects.

**THE CHALLENGE** that interest rates pose to renewable energy isn’t new. Indeed, it’s been a key point of discussion in energy and climate circles since inflation began to rise rapidly post-COVID. But what is new is the prospect of a longer period of sustained high interest rates. Billions in

**The energy infrastructure we build today will be around for decades**

renewable-energy projects have been announced in the time since the passage of the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, President Joe Biden’s landmark climate law, but many projects still require final investment decisions. And higher interest rates risk causing the math not to add up.

The interest-rate environment is a definite headwind, but there are still reasons to stay the course with renewable energy. Of course, the economics of wind and solar is highly location-dependent. In many places, these projects remain a good bet even with higher interest rates. In some places, including Europe, governments have set decarbonization or renewable-energy standards that must be met regardless of additional cost. Lastly, it’s worth considering that energy markets are dynamic, a trend that’s bound to continue. A spike in fossil-fuel prices driven by geopolitical instability or other unexpected developments could quickly shift the math. In short, renewable energy can help advance energy security.

And then there’s the climate imperative. The energy infrastructure we build today will be around for decades and determine how far away we land from meeting climate targets. **If interest rates seem likely to remain high for years into the future, policymakers keen to address climate change may need to look for new ways to continue to nudge the world toward cleaner energy sources.** That could mean the further development of carbon markets designed to put a cost on emitting or implementing new mechanisms designed to reduce the cost of financing clean-energy projects. And, finally, a sustained period of high interest rates strengthens the case for policymakers to reduce the cost of renewables in the domains they do control, including by helping accelerate the permitting process.



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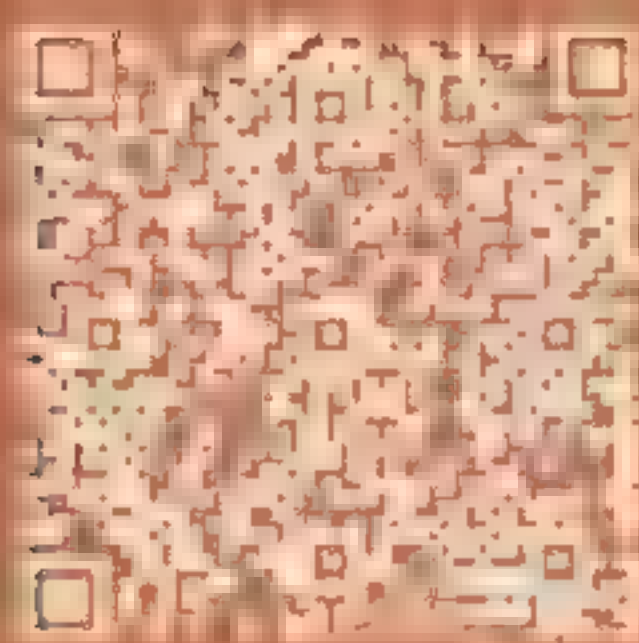


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SOCIETY

## Why the Westminster Dog Show made me appreciate mutts

BY TOMMY TOMLINSON

I SPENT THREE YEARS AMONG DOGS WITH BLOODLINES like British royalty. In our world, they would be earls and duchesses. Their names are in stud books that go back many generations. They are the product of centuries of careful breeding to make them the most perfect versions of themselves.

Eh. I like mutts better.

It's not that I didn't like the dogs I met at dog shows around the U.S.—including the most prestigious of them all, the Westminster Dog Show. They were beautiful specimens: athletic, combed to a high sheen, well behaved.

In fact, the dogs on the dog-show circuit—a never-ending tour of big cities and small towns all over America, a rolling caravan that I came to think of as “Dogland”—have to meet brutal guidelines just to step into the ring. Each of the American Kennel

Club's 200 recognized breeds has a written standard that outlines what a prime example of the breed can and cannot be. Some breed standards run thousands of words.

Dogs that meet all the rules and make it to the top of the show world are just about physically perfect. I spent a lot of time with a Samoyed named Striker who won more than 100 dog shows all over North America. One time I asked his handler, Laura King, to tell me where Striker fails to meet the Samoyed breed standard, which runs to 1,600 words. The only thing she could think of was a slight discoloration on the inside of his lip.

None of this is by accident. Breeders choose the puppies they believe to be “show quality” when they are just a few weeks old. (The other dogs in the litter are deemed “pet quality.” Dogland is the only place where that phrase serves as a dig.) The ones who grow up to be champion show dogs are then bred with other champion show dogs to produce, naturally, even more champion show dogs. But that process, repeated over generations within a breed, leads to what people in Dogland refer to as “line breeding.” What it means, in practice, is that show dogs are inbred.

**INBREEDING IS FAIRLY COMMON** among all types of animals. Intensive inbreeding, in situations like the show-dog world, can have long-term medical effects. That's because recessive genes that could get muted by crossbreeding get amplified instead. This means that nearly every breed of purebred dog has chronic health problems that never get fixed. In 2015, a group of researchers analyzed the records of nearly 89,000 dogs that came through a California

veterinary hospital over a 15-year span. They found that purebreds were more likely than mutts to have any of 10 different genetic conditions—everything from cataracts to dermatitis to bloat (a distended-stomach condition that can be fatal). Perfection always comes with a price.

Thinking about that price led me to think about the parade of dogs I've been lucky enough to know through-

out my life. Nearly all of them have been mutts, and you could tell just by looking at them. The dogs I've loved have had crooked teeth and scrawny butts. They walked a little sideways or drooled from one side of the mouth. They were all, in their own way, perfectly imperfect.

My wife and I had the great luck to live with a yellow

Lab mutt, Fred, who arrived in our lives as a stray puppy in the ditch in our old front yard. Fred wouldn't have lasted five minutes in a show ring. His back end sometimes strayed when he walked, like a fishtailing car. But he was the most loving and lovable dog I've ever been around. Never once, in his entire life, did he harm another living thing.

It broke our hearts when old age, and a tumor on his liver, finally got him. But he made it to 14½ years—more than two years longer than the average life of a purebred yellow Lab. I think of that now as extra innings, a second helping of dessert.

There were many purebreds in Dogland that I would have taken home in a second if I'd had the chance. It was breathtaking to watch them sometimes, like being in the front row at an NBA game. But if you gave me all the dogs in the world to choose from, I'd start with the ones that are a little lopsided, asymmetrical, funky. Our quirks are features, not flaws. Give me a mutt.

Tomlinson is the author of *Dogland*



Great Danes during the 147th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in Queens, N.Y., on May 9, 2023



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## HEALTH

# It's time to treat sugar like cigarettes

BY MARK HYMAN AND RON GUTMAN

THE FOOD WE EAT IMPACTS EVERY aspect of our lives and our bodies: our hormones, brain chemistry, immune system, microbiome; the list goes on. As consumers, we deserve the right to easily understand our foods' nutritional value in order to make informed decisions about what we consume and how that will impact our health. This is especially important when it comes to ingredients that are detrimental when eaten in excess, like sugar. As researchers in functional medicine, longevity, AI, and nutrition, we have dedicated our professional lives to improving the health and well-being of millions everywhere. And while we applaud the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for taking important strides to pass mandatory front-of-package labeling for packaged foods in the U.S., this change can't come soon enough. Everyone's health depends on it.

The FDA recommends that adults consume no more than 50 grams of added sugar per day (based on a 2,000-calorie diet), but the average American consumes closer to one-third of a pound of sugar daily, more than three times the recommended amount. To put that into perspective, the average American consumes over 100 lb. of sugar per year. With that much sugar consumption, it is no wonder that 49% of American adults are diabetic or prediabetic. What's worse is that much of our sugar consumption occurs without our even realizing it.

Seventy-four percent of packaged foods in the U.S. contain added sugar, including seemingly healthy foods such as salad dressing, coleslaw, and even baked beans, marinades, and yogurt; some sweetened yogurts contain more sugar than a can of soda. That sugar is so biologically addictive—studies indicate it is eight times as addictive as cocaine—makes the reality that it's hidden in so many foods even more harmful. Most of us are addicted to sugar, and we don't even know it.

**THIS CYCLE OF ADDICTION** is relentless and hard to break: we eat food with sugar, which then triggers a spike in blood sugar,

# 150

GRAMS

The approximate amount of added sugar the average American consumes daily

MOST OF US ARE ADDICTED TO SUGAR  
AND WE DON'T EVEN KNOW IT

# 50

GRAMS

The maximum amount of added sugar the FDA recommends adults consume per day

which lights up the pleasure center in our brain. When the inevitable sugar crash comes, we seek that spike again in the form of craving more sugar. Without easily discernible food labeling, shoppers unknowingly create this cycle inside their own bodies, even while they erroneously think the food they're buying is healthy.

**IN MANY COUNTRIES**, labels on packaged foods serve a similar function to labels on cigarette cartons: to warn consumers of risk. In Chile, a policy of “high in” labels on the front of sugary drinks dramatically reduced the consumption of those beverages. In Israel, a front-of-package labeling system in which a red label indicates an item high in sugar has led to significant positive changes in the food-buying habits of 76% of the population.

The problem is that those in the U.S. lobbying against this front-of-package change, unsurprisingly, have an interest in the continued popularity of their products. In a February 2023 joint filing, the nation's largest cereal producers threatened a lawsuit after the proposed changes would not allow them to label products as “healthy” if they didn't meet nutritional standards.

This dynamic is similar to changes made in cigarette advertising in the 20th century. In the 1940s, a famous Camel cigarettes campaign featured the slogan “More doctors smoke Camels.” By 1969, a mandatory warning label was added to cigarettes, allowing consumers to make more informed choices about their health. Today the percentage of Americans who smoke is 11%, compared with nearly 50% back in the day. Life expectancy rose nearly 11 years in that span of time, and the decrease in smoking certainly contributed.

FDA leadership ensuring labeling of high contents of sugar in packaged foods could increase awareness and reduce the negative impacts of sugar and help millions live healthier, longer lives. This change would help us make more informed choices about our food and our health. We believe it is every American's right to have clear and visible information about the sugar content of the foods we are eating in order to make those decisions.

*Hyman is a practicing family physician. Gutman is a health care and technology entrepreneur*



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# If He Wins

In exclusive interviews with TIME, Donald Trump lays out a second-term agenda that would reshape America and its role in the world

BY ERIC CORTELLESA/PALM BEACH, FLA.

DONALD TRUMP THINKS HE'S IDENTIFIED A crucial mistake of his first term: He was too nice.

We've been talking for more than an hour on April 12 at his fever-dream palace in Palm Beach. Aides lurk around the perimeter of a gilded dining room overlooking the manicured lawn. When one nudges me to wrap up the interview, I bring up the many former Cabinet officials who refuse to endorse Trump this time. Some have publicly warned that he poses a danger to the Republic. Why should voters trust you, I ask, when some of the people who observed you most closely do not?

As always, Trump punches back, denigrating his former top advisers. But beneath the typical torrent of invective, there is a larger lesson he has taken away. "I let them quit because I have a heart. I don't want to embarrass anybody," Trump says. "I don't think I'll do that again. From now on, I'll fire."

Six months from the 2024 presidential election, Trump is better positioned to win the White House than at any point in either of his previous campaigns. He leads Joe Biden by slim margins in most polls, including in several of the seven swing states likely to determine the outcome. But I had not come to ask about the election, the disgrace

that followed the last one, or how he has become the first former—and perhaps future—American President to face a criminal trial. I wanted to know what Trump would do if he wins a second term, to hear his vision for the nation, in his own words.

What emerged in two interviews with Trump, and conversations with more than a dozen of his closest advisers and confidants, were the outlines of an imperial presidency that would reshape America and its role in the world. To carry out a deportation operation designed to remove more than 11 million people from the country, Trump told me, he would be willing to build migrant detention camps and deploy the U.S. military, both at the border and inland. He would let red states monitor women's pregnancies and prosecute those who violate abortion bans. He would, at his personal discretion, withhold funds appropriated by Congress, according to top advisers. He would be willing to fire a U.S. Attorney who doesn't carry out his order to prosecute someone, breaking with a tradition of independent law enforcement that dates from America's founding. He is weighing pardons for every one of his supporters accused of attacking the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, more than 800 of whom have pleaded guilty or been convicted by a jury. He might not come to the aid of an attacked ally in Europe or Asia if he felt that country wasn't paying enough for its own defense. He would gut the U.S. civil service, deploy the National Guard to American cities as he sees fit, close the White House pandemic-preparedness office, and staff his Administration with acolytes who back his false assertion that the 2020 election was stolen.

Trump remains the same guy, with the same goals and grievances. But in person, if anything, he appears more assertive and confident. "When I first got to Washington, I knew very few people," he says. "I had to rely on people." Now he is in





*The former President,  
at Mar-a-Lago on April 12,  
is rallying the right at  
home and seeking  
common cause with  
autocratic leaders abroad*

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP  
MONTGOMERY FOR TIME



charge. The arranged marriage with the timorous Republican Party stalwarts is over; the old guard is vanquished, and the people who remain are his people. Trump would enter a second term backed by a slew of policy shops staffed by loyalists who have drawn up detailed plans in service of his agenda, which would concentrate the powers of the state in the hands of a man whose appetite for power appears all but insatiable. “I don’t think it’s a big mystery what his agenda would be,” says his close adviser Kellyanne Conway. “But I think people will be surprised at the alacrity with which he will take action.”

The courts, the Constitution, and a Congress of unknown composition would all have a say in whether Trump’s objectives come to pass. The machinery of Washington has a range of defenses: leaks to a free press, whistle-blower protections, the oversight of inspectors general. The same deficiencies of temperament and judgment that hindered him in the past remain present. If he wins, Trump would be a lame duck—contrary to the suggestions of some supporters, he tells *TIME* he would not seek to overturn or ignore the Constitution’s prohibition on a third term. Public opinion would also be a powerful check. Amid a popular outcry, Trump was forced to scale back some of his most draconian first-term initiatives, including the policy of separating migrant families. As George Orwell wrote in 1945, the ability of governments to carry out their designs “depends on the general temper in the country.”

Every election is billed as a national turning point. This time that rings true. To supporters, the prospect of Trump 2.0, unconstrained and backed by a disciplined movement of true believers, offers revolutionary promise. To much of the rest of the nation and the world, it represents an alarming risk. A second Trump term could bring “the end of our democracy,” says presidential historian Douglas Brinkley, “and the birth of a new kind of authoritarian presidential order.”

**TRUMP STEPS ONTO THE PATIO** at Mar-a-Lago near dusk. The well-heeled crowd eating Wagyu steaks and grilled branzino pauses to applaud as he takes his seat. On this gorgeous evening, the club is a MAGA mecca. Billionaire donor Steve Wynn is here. So is Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, who is dining with the former President after a joint press conference proposing legislation to prevent noncitizens from voting. Their voting in federal elections is already illegal, and extremely rare, but remains a Trumpian fixation that the embattled Speaker appeared happy to co-sign in exchange for the political cover that standing with Trump provides.

At the moment, though, Trump’s attention



**‘If we don’t win, you know, it depends.’**

—TRUMP, ON THE POSSIBILITY OF POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE

is elsewhere. With an index finger, he swipes through an iPad on the table to curate the restaurant’s soundtrack. The playlist veers from Sinead O’Connor to James Brown to *The Phantom of the Opera*. And there’s a uniquely Trump choice: a rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner” sung by a choir of defendants imprisoned for attacking the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, interspersed with a recording of Trump reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. This has become a staple of his rallies, converting the ultimate symbol of national unity into a weapon of factional devotion.

The spectacle picks up where his first term left off. The events of Jan. 6, during which a pro-Trump mob attacked the center of American democracy in an effort to subvert the peaceful transfer of power, was a profound stain on his legacy. Trump has sought to recast an insurrectionist riot as an act of patriotism. “I call them the J-6 patriots,” he says. When I ask whether he would consider pardoning every one of them, he says, “Yes, absolutely.” As Trump faces dozens of felony charges, including for election interference,





conspiracy to defraud the United States, willful retention of national-security secrets, and falsifying business records to conceal hush-money payments, he has tried to turn legal peril into a badge of honor.

In a second term, Trump's influence on American democracy would extend far beyond pardoning powers. Allies are laying the groundwork to restructure the presidency in line with a doctrine called the unitary executive theory, which holds that many of the constraints imposed on the White House by legislators and the courts should be swept away in favor of a more powerful Commander in Chief.

Nowhere would that power be more momentous than at the Department of Justice. Since the nation's earliest days, Presidents have generally kept a respectful distance from Senate-confirmed law-enforcement officials to avoid exploiting for personal ends their enormous ability to curtail Americans' freedoms. But Trump, burned in his first term by multiple investigations directed by his own appointees, is ever more vocal about

▲  
Trump  
addresses  
the crowd at  
a campaign  
rally in  
Schnecksville,  
Pa., on  
April 13

imposing his will directly on the department and its far-flung investigators and prosecutors.

In our Mar-a-Lago interview, Trump says he might fire U.S. Attorneys who refuse his orders to prosecute someone: "It would depend on the situation." He's told supporters he would seek retribution against his enemies in a second term. Would that include Fani Willis, the Atlanta-area district attorney who charged him with election interference, or Alvin Bragg, the Manhattan DA in the Stormy Daniels case, who Trump has previously said should be prosecuted? Trump demurs but offers no promises. "No, I don't want to do that," he says, before adding, "We're gonna look at a lot of things. What they've done is a terrible thing."

Trump has also vowed to appoint a "real special prosecutor" to go after Biden. "I wouldn't want to hurt Biden," he tells me. "I have too much respect for the office." Seconds later, though, he suggests Biden's fate may be tied to an upcoming Supreme Court ruling on whether Presidents can face criminal prosecution for acts committed in office. "If they said that a President doesn't get immunity," says Trump, "then Biden, I am sure, will be prosecuted for all of his crimes." (Biden has not been charged with any, and a House Republican effort to impeach him has failed to unearth evidence of any crimes or misdemeanors, high or low.)

Such moves would be potentially catastrophic for the credibility of American law enforcement, scholars and former Justice Department leaders from both parties say. "If he ordered an improper prosecution, I would expect any respectable U.S. Attorney to say no," says Michael McConnell, a former U.S. appellate judge appointed by President George W. Bush. "If the President fired the U.S. Attorney, it would be an enormous firestorm." McConnell, now a Stanford law professor, says the dismissal could have a cascading effect similar to the Saturday Night Massacre, when President Richard Nixon ordered top DOJ officials to remove the special counsel investigating Watergate. Presidents have the constitutional right to fire U.S. Attorneys, and typically replace their predecessors' appointees upon taking office. But discharging one specifically for refusing a President's order would be all but unprecedented.

Trump's radical designs for presidential power would be felt throughout the country. A main focus is the southern border. Trump says he plans to sign orders to reinstall many of the same policies from his first term, such as the Remain in Mexico program, which requires that non-Mexican asylum seekers be sent south of the border until their court dates, and Title 42, which allows border officials to expel migrants without letting them apply for asylum. Advisers say he plans to cite record border crossings and fentanyl- and child-trafficking





as justification for reimposing the emergency measures. He would direct federal funding to resume construction of the border wall, likely by allocating money from the military budget without congressional approval. The capstone of this program, advisers say, would be a massive deportation operation that would target millions of people. Trump made similar pledges in his first term, but says he plans to be more aggressive in a second. “People need to be deported,” says Tom Homan, a top Trump adviser and former acting head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. “No one should be off the table.”

For an operation of that scale, Trump says he would rely mostly on the National Guard to round up and remove undocumented migrants throughout the country. “If they weren’t able to, then I’d use [other parts of] the military,” he says. When I ask if that means he would override the Posse Comitatus Act—an 1878 law that prohibits the use of military force on civilians—Trump seems unmoved by the weight of the statute. “Well, these aren’t civilians,” he says. “These are people that aren’t legally in our country.” He would also seek help from local police and says he would deny funding for jurisdictions that decline to adopt his policies. “There’s a possibility that some won’t want to participate,” Trump says, “and they won’t partake in the riches.”

As President, Trump nominated three Supreme Court Justices who voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, and he claims credit for his role in ending a constitutional right to an abortion. At the same time, he has sought to defuse a potent campaign issue for the Democrats by saying he wouldn’t sign a federal ban. In our interview at Mar-a-Lago, he declines to commit to vetoing any additional federal restrictions if they came to his desk. More than 20 states now have full or partial abortion bans, and Trump says those policies should be left to the states to do what they want, including monitoring women’s

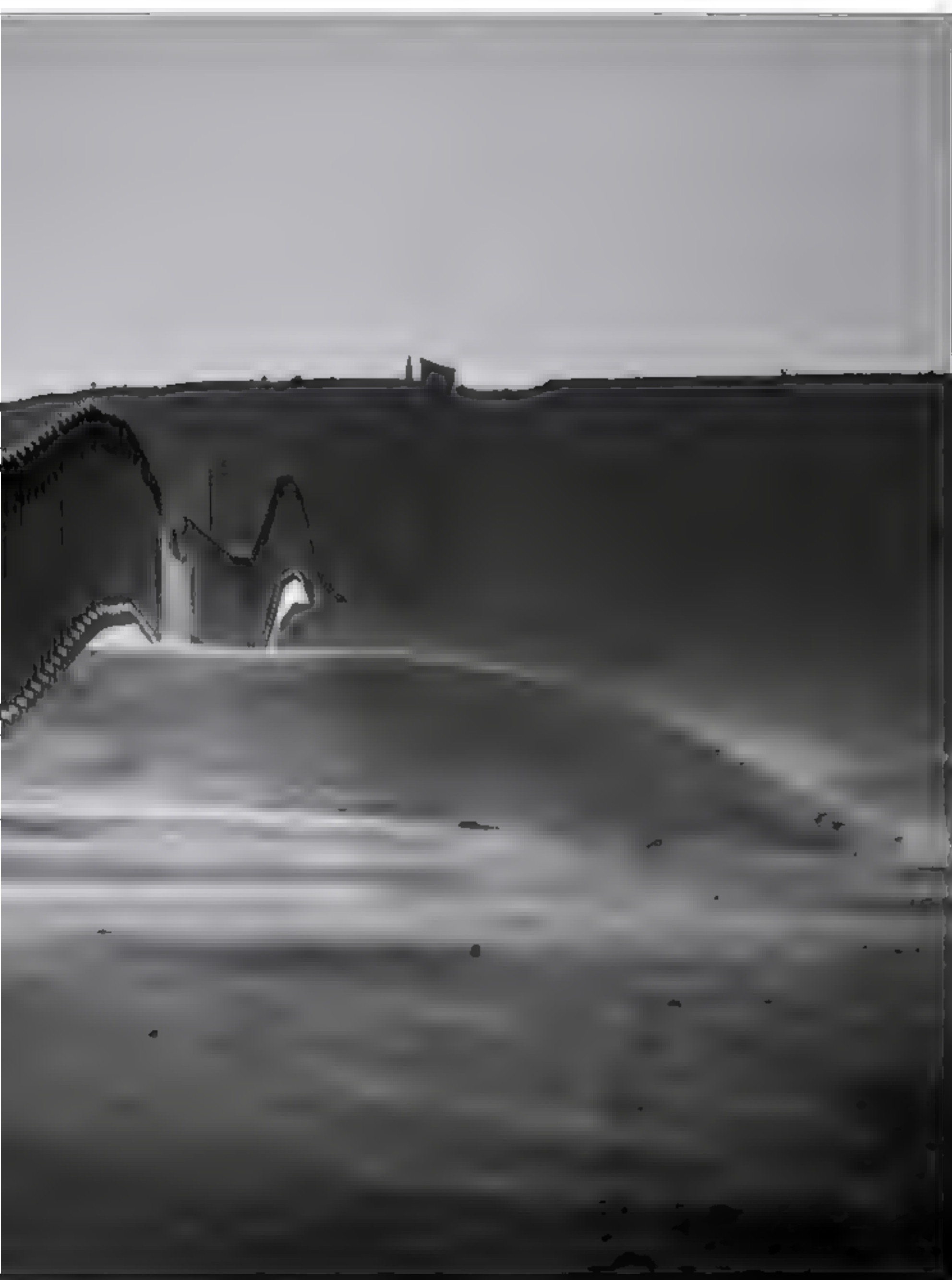
*The Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol is a profound stain on Trump’s legacy, one that he has sought to recast as an act of patriotism*

pregnancies. “I think they might do that,” he says. When I ask whether he would be comfortable with states prosecuting women for having abortions beyond the point the laws permit, he says, “It’s irrelevant whether I’m comfortable or not. It’s totally irrelevant, because the states are going to make those decisions.” President Biden has said he would fight state antiabortion measures in court and with regulation.

Trump’s allies don’t plan to be passive on abortion if he returns to power. The Heritage Foundation has called for enforcement of a 19th century statute that would outlaw the mailing of abortion pills. The Republican Study Committee (RSC), which includes more than 80% of the House GOP conference, included in its 2025 budget proposal the Life at Conception Act, which says the right to life extends to “the moment of fertilization.” I ask Trump if he would veto that bill if it came to his desk. “I don’t have to do anything about vetoes,” Trump says, “because we now have it back in the states.”

Presidents typically have a narrow window to pass major legislation. Trump’s team is eyeing two bills to kick off a second term: a border-security and immigration package, and an extension of his 2017 tax cuts. Many of the latter’s provisions expire early in 2025: the tax cuts on individual income brackets, 100% business expensing, the doubling of the estate-tax deduction. Trump is planning to intensify his protectionist agenda, telling me he’s considering a tariff of more than 10% on all imports, and perhaps even a 100% tariff on some Chinese goods. Trump says the tariffs will liberate the U.S. economy from being at the mercy of foreign manufacturing and spur an industrial renaissance in the U.S. When I point out that independent analysts estimate Trump’s first-term tariffs on thousands of products, including steel and aluminum, solar panels, and washing machines, may have cost the U.S. \$316 billion and more than 300,000





jobs, by one account, he dismisses these experts out of hand. His advisers argue that the average yearly inflation rate in his first term—under 2%—is evidence that his tariffs won't raise prices.

Since leaving office, Trump has tried to engineer a caucus of the compliant, clearing primary fields in Senate and House races. His hope is that GOP majorities replete with MAGA diehards could rubber-stamp his legislative agenda and nominees. Representative Jim Banks of Indiana, a former RSC chairman and the GOP nominee for the state's open Senate seat, recalls an August 2022 RSC planning meeting with Trump at his residence in Bedminster, N.J. As the group arrived, Banks recalls, news broke that Mar-a-Lago had been raided by the FBI. Banks was sure the meeting would be canceled. Moments later, Trump walked through the doors, defiant and pledging to run again. "I need allies there when I'm elected," Banks recalls Trump saying. The difference in a second Trump term, Banks says now, "is he's going to have the backup in Congress that he didn't have before."

**TRUMP'S INTENTION** to remake America's relations abroad may be just as consequential. Since its founding, the U.S. has sought to build and sustain alliances based on the shared values of political and economic freedom. Trump takes a much more transactional approach to international relations than his predecessors, expressing disdain for what he views as free-riding friends and appreciation for authoritarian leaders like President Xi Jinping of China, Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, or former President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil.

That's one reason America's traditional allies were horrified when Trump recently said at a campaign rally that Russia could "do whatever the hell they want" to a NATO country he believes doesn't spend enough on collective defense. That wasn't idle bluster, Trump tells me. "If you're not going to pay, then you're on

Left: the U.S. border fence in Sunland Park, N.M.; right: a protester confronts members of the Minnesota National Guard after the murder of George Floyd

your own," he says. Trump has long said the alliance is ripping the U.S. off. Former NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg credited Trump's first-term threat to pull out of the alliance with spurring other members to add more than \$100 billion to their defense budgets.

But an insecure NATO is as likely to accrue to Russia's benefit as it is to America's. President Vladimir Putin's 2022 invasion of Ukraine looks to many in Europe and the U.S. like a test of his broader vision to reconstruct the Soviet empire. Under Biden and a bipartisan Congress, the U.S. has sent more than \$100 billion to Ukraine to defend itself. It's unlikely Trump would extend the same support to Kyiv. After Orban visited Mar-a-Lago in March, he said Trump "wouldn't give a penny" to Ukraine. "I wouldn't give unless Europe starts equalizing," Trump hedges in our interview. "If Europe is not going to pay, why should we pay? They're much more greatly affected. We have an ocean in between us. They don't." (E.U. nations have given more than \$100 billion in aid to Ukraine as well.)

Trump has historically been reluctant to criticize or confront Putin. He sided with the Russian autocrat over his own intelligence community when it asserted that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. Even now, Trump uses Putin as a foil for his own political purposes. When I asked Trump why he has not called for the release of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich, who has been unjustly held on spurious charges in a Moscow prison for a year, Trump says, "I guess because I have so many other things I'm working on." Gershkovich should be freed, he adds, but he doubts it will happen before the election. "The reporter should be released and he will be released," Trump tells me. "I don't know if he's going to be released under Biden. I would get him released."

America's Asian allies, like its European ones, may be on their own under Trump. Taiwan's Foreign



Minister recently said aid to Ukraine was critical in deterring Xi from invading the island. Communist China's leaders "have to understand that things like that can't come easy," Trump says, but he declines to say whether he would come to Taiwan's defense.

Trump is less cryptic on current U.S. troop deployments in Asia. If South Korea doesn't pay more to support U.S. troops there to deter Kim Jong Un's increasingly belligerent regime to the north, Trump suggests the U.S. could withdraw its forces. "We have 40,000 troops that are in a precarious position," he tells *TIME*. (The number is actually 28,500.) "Which doesn't make any sense. Why would we defend somebody? And we're talking about a very wealthy country."

Transactional isolationism may be the main strain of Trump's foreign policy, but there are limits. Trump says he would join Israel's side in a confrontation with Iran. "If they attack Israel, yes, we would be there," he tells me. He says he has come around to the now widespread belief in Israel that a Palestinian state existing side by side in peace is increasingly unlikely. "There was a time when I thought two-state could work," he says. "Now I think two-state is going to be very, very tough."

Yet even his support for Israel is not absolute. He's criticized Israel's handling of its war against Hamas, which has killed more than 30,000 Palestinians in Gaza, and has called for the nation to "get it over with." When I ask whether he would consider withholding U.S. military aid to Israel to push it toward winding down the war, he doesn't say yes, but he doesn't rule it out, either. He is sharply critical of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, once a close ally. "I had a bad experience with Bibi," Trump says. In his telling, a January 2020 U.S. operation to assassinate a top Iranian general was supposed to be a joint attack until Netanyahu backed out at the last moment. "That was something I never forgot," he says. He blames Netanyahu for failing to prevent the Oct. 7 attack, when Hamas militants infiltrated southern Israel and killed nearly 1,200 people amid acts of brutality including burning entire families alive and raping women and girls. "It happened on his watch," Trump says.

**ON THE SECOND DAY** of Trump's New York trial on April 17, I stand behind the packed counter of the Sanaa Convenience Store on 139th Street and Broadway, waiting for Trump to drop in for a postcourt campaign stop. He chose the bodega for its history. In 2022, one of the store's clerks fatally stabbed a customer who attacked him. Bragg, the Manhattan DA, charged the clerk with second-degree murder. (The charges were later dropped amid public outrage over video footage that appeared to show the clerk acting in self-defense.) A baseball bat behind the counter alludes

to lingering security concerns. When Trump arrives, he asks the store's co-owner, Maad Ahmed, a Yemeni immigrant, about safety. "You should be allowed to have a gun," Trump tells Ahmed. "If you had a gun, you'd never get robbed."

On the campaign trail, Trump uses crime as a cudgel, painting urban America as a savage hell-scape even though violent crime has declined in recent years, with homicides sinking 6% in 2022 and 13% in 2023, according to the FBI. When I point this out, Trump tells me he thinks the data, which is collected by state and local police departments, is rigged. "It's a lie," he says. He has pledged to send the National Guard into cities struggling with crime in a second term—possibly without the request of governors—and plans to approve Justice Department grants only to cities that adopt his preferred policing methods like stop-and-frisk.

To critics, Trump's preoccupation with crime is a racial dog whistle. In polls, large numbers of his supporters have expressed the view that anti-white racism now represents a greater problem in the U.S. than the systemic racism that has long afflicted Black Americans. When I ask if he agrees, Trump does not dispute this position. "There is a definite antiwhite feeling in the country," he tells *TIME*, "and that can't be allowed either." In a second term, advisers say, a Trump Administration would rescind Biden's Executive Orders designed to boost diversity and racial equity.

Trump's ability to campaign for the White House in the midst of an unprecedented criminal trial is the product of a more professional campaign operation that has avoided the infighting that plagued past versions. "He has a very disciplined team around him," says Representative Elise Stefanik of New York. "That is an indicator of how disciplined and focused a second term will be." That control now extends to the party writ large. In 2016, the GOP establishment, having failed to derail Trump's campaign, surrounded him with staff who sought to temper him. Today the party's permanent class have either devoted themselves to the gospel of MAGA or given up. Trump has cleaned house at the Republican National Committee, installing hand-picked leaders—including his daughter-in-law—who have reportedly imposed loyalty tests on prospective job applicants, asking whether they believe the false assertion that the 2020 election was stolen. (The RNC has denied there is a litmus test.) Trump tells me he would have trouble hiring anyone who admits Biden won: "I wouldn't feel good about it."

Policy groups are creating a government-in-waiting full of true believers. The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 has drawn up plans for legislation and Executive Orders as it trains prospective personnel for a second Trump term. The Center

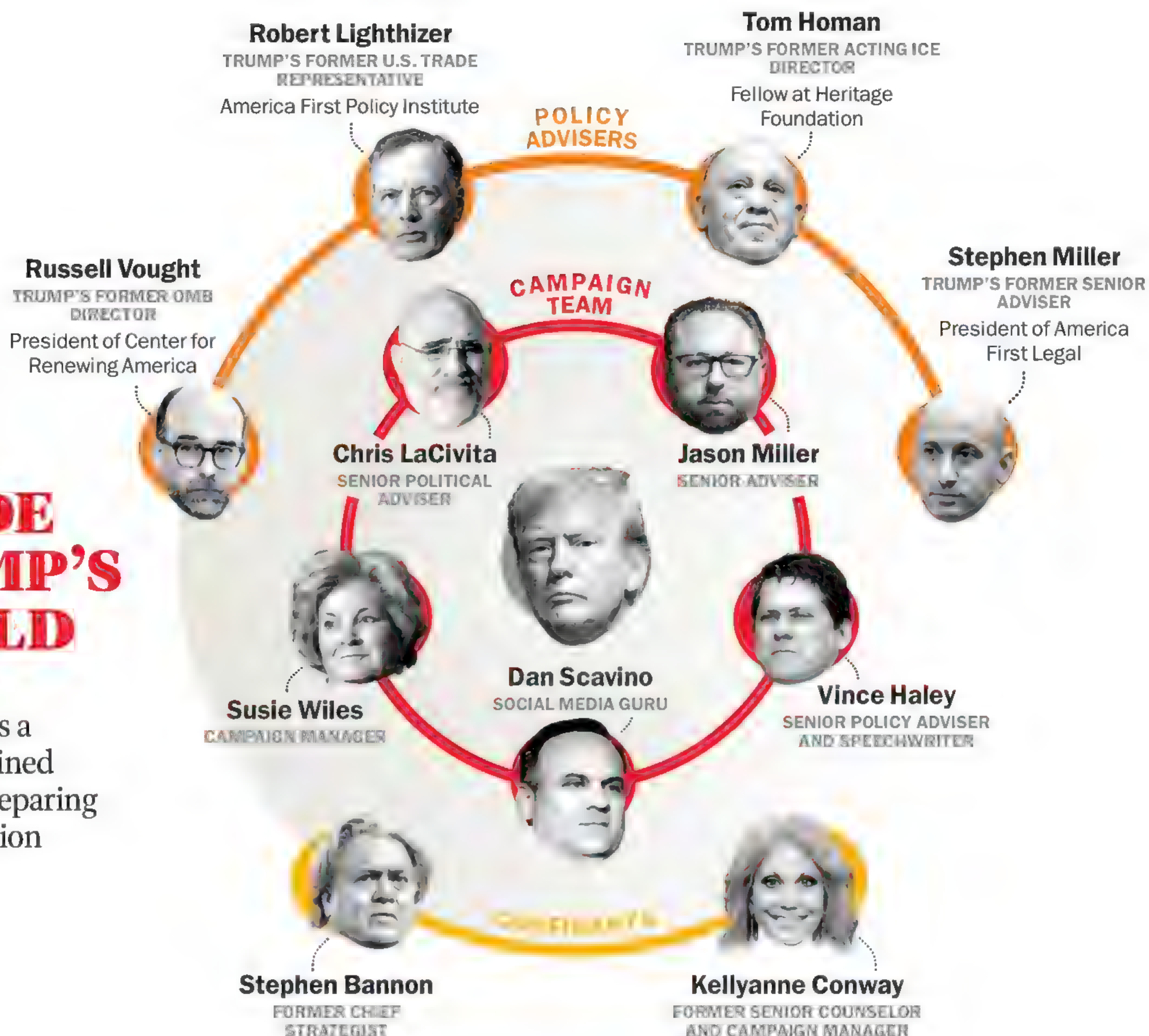
**'There is  
a definite  
antiwhite  
feeling in  
the country.'**

—TRUMP



## INSIDE TRUMP'S WORLD

The former President has a more disciplined operation preparing to put his vision into action



for Renewing America, led by Russell Vought, Trump's former director of the Office of Management and Budget, is dedicated to disempowering the so-called administrative state, the collection of bureaucrats with the power to control everything from drug-safety determinations to the contents of school lunches. The America First Policy Institute is a research haven of pro-Trump right-wing populists. America First Legal, led by Trump's immigration adviser Stephen Miller, is mounting court battles against the Biden Administration.

The goal of these groups is to put Trump's vision into action on day one. "The President never had a policy process that was designed to give him what he actually wanted and campaigned on," says Vought. "[We are] sorting through the legal authorities, the mechanics, and providing the momentum for a future Administration." That includes a litany of boundary-pushing right-wing policies, including slashing Department of Justice funding and cutting climate and environmental regulations.

Trump's campaign says he would be the final decisionmaker on which policies suggested by these organizations would get implemented. But at the least, these advisers could form the front lines of a planned march against what Trump dubs the Deep State, marrying bureaucratic savvy to their leader's antibureaucratic

zeal. One weapon in Trump's second-term "War on Washington" is a wonky one: restoring the power of impoundment, which allowed Presidents to withhold congressionally appropriated funds. Impoundment was a favorite maneuver of Nixon, who used his authority to freeze funding for subsidized housing and the Environmental Protection Agency. Trump and his allies plan to challenge a 1974 law that prohibits use of the measure, according to campaign policy advisers.

Another inside move is the enforcement of Schedule F, which allows the President to fire non-political government officials and which Trump says he would embrace. "You have some people that are protected that shouldn't be protected," he says. A senior U.S. judge offers an example of how consequential such a move could be. Suppose there's another pandemic, and President Trump wants to push the use of an untested drug, much as he did with hydroxychloroquine during COVID-19. Under Schedule F, if the drug's medical reviewer at the Food and Drug Administration refuses to sign off on its use, Trump could fire them, and anyone else who doesn't approve it. The Trump team says the President needs the power to hold bureaucrats accountable to voters. "The mere mention of Schedule F," says Vought, "ensures that the bureaucracy moves in your direction."





Trump supporters gather outside Manhattan Criminal Court on April 15 for the first day of his trial

It can be hard at times to discern Trump's true intentions. In his interviews with *TIME*, he often sidestepped questions or answered them in contradictory ways. There's no telling how his ego and self-destructive behavior might hinder his objectives. And for all his norm-breaking, there are lines he says he won't cross. When asked if he would comply with all orders upheld by the Supreme Court, Trump says he would.

But his policy preoccupations are clear and consistent. If Trump is able to carry out a fraction of his goals, the impact could prove as transformative as any presidency in more than a century. "He's in full war mode," says his former adviser and occasional confidant Stephen Bannon. Trump's sense of the state of the country is "quite apocalyptic," Bannon says. "That's where Trump's heart is. That's where his obsession is."

These obsessions could once again push the nation to the brink of crisis. Trump does not dismiss the possibility of political violence around the election. "If we don't win, you know, it depends," he tells *TIME*. "It always depends on the fairness of the election." When I ask what he meant when he baselessly claimed on Truth Social that a stolen election "allows for the termination of all rules, regulations and articles, even those found in the Constitution," Trump responded by denying he had said it. He then complained about the "Biden-inspired" court case he faces in New York and suggested that the "fascists" in America's government

were its greatest threat. "I think the enemy from within, in many cases, is much more dangerous for our country than the outside enemies of China, Russia, and various others," he tells me.

Toward the end of our conversation at Mar-a-Lago, I ask Trump to explain another troubling comment he made: that he wants to be dictator for a day. It came during a Fox News town hall with Sean Hannity, who gave Trump an opportunity to allay concerns that he would abuse power in office or seek retribution against political opponents. Trump said he would not be a dictator—"except for day one," he added. "I want to close the border, and I want to drill, drill, drill."

Trump says that the remark "was said in fun, in jest, sarcastically." He compares it to an infamous moment from the 2016 campaign, when he encouraged the Russians to hack and leak Hillary Clinton's emails. In Trump's mind, the media sensationalized those remarks too. But the Russians weren't joking: among many other efforts to influence the core exercise of American democracy that year, they hacked the Democratic National Committee's servers and disseminated its emails through WikiLeaks.

Whether or not he was kidding about bringing a tyrannical end to our 248-year experiment in democracy, I ask him, Don't you see why many Americans see such talk of dictatorship as contrary to our most cherished principles? Trump says no. Quite the opposite, he insists. "I think a lot of people like it." —With reporting by LESLIE DICKSTEIN, SIMMONE SHAH, and JULIA ZORTHIAN □



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# Uranium dreams

The promise of clean nuclear power brings the West to Mongolia

By Charlie Campbell/  
Sainshand, Mongolia

THE GOBI DESERT, ONCE REVERED BY MONGOLIAN poet Dulduityn Danzanravjaa as hiding a cosmic portal to the heavenly kingdom of Shambala, was transformed in the 20th century from spiritual energy center to fossil-fuel hub. Wild rabbits and donkeys share the windswept dunes with rusting oil pumps, while an endless caravan of soot-stained trucks haul coal south to the border with China. Now, the Gobi is on the cusp of another reincarnation, one that its supporters believe could help future-proof the global energy landscape.

In October, the French state-owned nuclear firm Orano signed a \$1.7 billion deal to extract and process uranium from the Zuuvch-Ovoo mine, not two hours by car from the landmarked site of Danzanravjaa's cosmic portal.

PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY NANNA  
HEITMANN—  
MAGNUM PHOTOS  
FOR TIME



STORAGE  
SHIPPING  
CONTAINERS

LABORATORY

LARGE  
CELL  
TOWER

GENERATORS/  
FUEL STORAGE

GENERATORS/  
FUEL STORAGE

WASTEWATER  
POND



Mongolia's first uranium mine is expected to produce about 2,750 tons annually for three decades, some 4% of global production; it's currently one of the top 10 unexploited deposits worldwide.

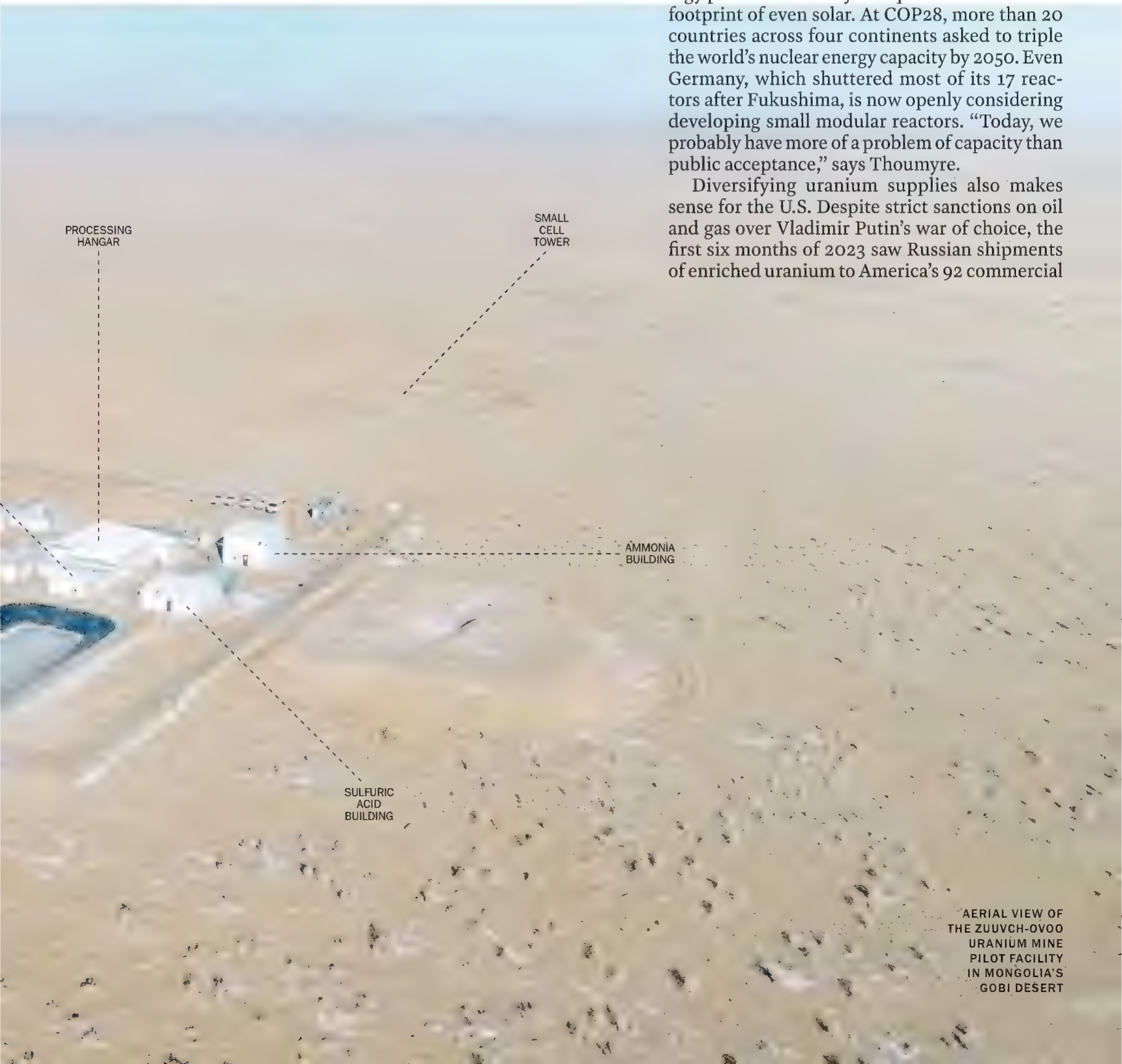
"This deposit is far from the only one," says Olivier Thoumyre, a senior vice president for Orano. "There is huge potential in Mongolia ... to enter the uranium market at the right time, because we know needs are going to increase." Mongolia boasts the world's second largest uranium reserves, which promise to catapult this landlocked nation of 3.5 million into position as a key player in the global renewable-energy transition.

Catalyzed by the war in Ukraine and Europe's desire to wean itself off cheap Russian gas, support is booming for clean nuclear energy, which generates electricity by splitting atoms of uranium or plutonium. The enthusiasm must overcome deep anxiety over reactor meltdowns such as those at Chernobyl in 1986 and Fukushima in 2011, questions about the disposal of nuclear waste, and the potential for plants to be

targets of war or terrorism. But historic fatalities across seven decades of the civil nuclear industry are measured in the low thousands. Meanwhile, air pollution from burning fossil fuels is estimated to cause 5 million deaths every year.

Today, nations from Romania and Saudi Arabia to Bangladesh and Indonesia are exploring nuclear plants. The E.U. has included nuclear power plants in its list of "green" investments that can be funded by its own green bonds, given the energy produced boasts just a quarter of the carbon footprint of even solar. At COP28, more than 20 countries across four continents asked to triple the world's nuclear energy capacity by 2050. Even Germany, which shuttered most of its 17 reactors after Fukushima, is now openly considering developing small modular reactors. "Today, we probably have more of a problem of capacity than public acceptance," says Thoumyre.

Diversifying uranium supplies also makes sense for the U.S. Despite strict sanctions on oil and gas over Vladimir Putin's war of choice, the first six months of 2023 saw Russian shipments of enriched uranium to America's 92 commercial





nuclear reactors more than double, to \$695.5 million. Legislation to curb this supply passed the Senate in late April, though experts predict that it will take at least five years of heavy investment for the U.S. to break its Russian uranium dependency.

Mongolia can help in that regard, if it steps lightly. It may be an adolescent, rambunctious democracy, but a nation squeezed between Russia and China—and whose capital, Ulan Bator, literally translates as “red hero”—cannot shrug off historical and geopolitical baggage so easily. Since democratization in 1990, Mongolia has cultivated ties with the West via its “third-neighbor policy,” of which the Orano deal is a prime example. But a nation reliant on Beijing for 90% of trade and Moscow for 90% of imported gas and petroleum must tread carefully in this fraught new era of great-power competition. “Russia feels Mongolia’s mines are really their assets because Soviet money was invested into them,” says Ken de Graaf, a former vice chairman of the North America–Mongolia Business Council.

Mongolia is an acute illustration of the geopolitical, environmental, and economic challenges facing mineral-rich nations seeking to benefit from emerging technologies, whether supplying indium for flat-screen TVs, rhenium for jet engines, or gallium for smartphones. With mining already accounting for a quarter of GDP and 90% of exports, the hope in Mongolia is that this generation of energy extraction works out better than the last. The nation remains blighted by endemic poverty and, because of a reliance on coal for heat and power, some of the planet’s most rancid air. Over the past decade, respiratory diseases in Ulan Bator—the world’s most polluted capital—have increased nearly threefold, with pneumonia the second leading cause of death among young children today. Miscarriages are 3.5 times as common in Ulan Bator’s polluted winter as in the comparatively clear summer.

But resource exploitation is a charged issue in Mongolia, a third of whose people are nomadic and fiercely protective of ancestral lands, worshipping the Eternal Blue Sky and considering even a shallow trench a shameful defiling of Mother Earth. The challenge for Mongolia’s government is to safely harness the benefits of the resource boom while mitigating pushback within its borders and beyond.

“I’m confident that we will have a successful cooperation with Orano,” Mongolian Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai tells TIME. “But it is important for us to have public acceptance so that the project can be legitimate among the people of Mongolia.”

**‘There is huge potential in Mongolia... to enter the uranium market at the right time.’**

—OLIVIER THOUMYRE, ORANO SVP

**SECURING THAT LEGITIMACY** has been a key focus for Orano, which formed a local joint venture, Badrakh Energy, to run Zuuvch-Ovoo alongside Mongolian state mining company Erdenes Mongol LLC. Orano began exploring the Gobi back in 1997, discovering its first uranium deposits in 2006 and obtaining licenses in 2016. It then built a pilot project to demonstrate feasibility, producing 11 tons of uranium over 18 months during 2021 and 2022. The pilot project remains staffed by a skeleton crew, though the site will likely be used for training the 800 permanent staff for the full mine, construction of which is slated to take three or four years.

Practically all Zuuvch-Ovoo’s neighbors are nomads who live in *gers*, otherwise known as *yurts*—felt-covered domed tents of latticed wood with central dung-burning stoves. Mongolians assemble their *gers* to



face south to catch the light; they can be easily transported on camels to follow grazing herds and reassembled in under an hour. It’s a harsh existence with temperatures in the Gobi plunging to  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$  in the winter and soaring to  $113^{\circ}\text{F}$  during summer. *Gers* are still constructed as they have been for millennia, albeit now with solar-powered televisions, refrigerators, and wi-fi connections.

When Orano first set up camp nearby, the herders were suspicious, unnerved by alarmist social media posts that incorrectly suggested





A WORKER TENDS  
TO SYNTHETIC-  
RESIN TANKS AT  
THE ZUUVCH-OVVOO  
URANIUM MINE

radiation from uranium could cause mutations in livestock. (Toxic waste is a concern nuclear power plants must deal with, but mining raw uranium exposes workers to far less radiation than a job as a hospital radiologist would.) Staff would be chased away by furious locals, who hurled dead animals and once even a Molotov cocktail into the mine's compound. It didn't help that Mongolia's first COVID-19 case was an Orano employee visiting from France, a fact that energized demonstrations. But a slow and steady outreach program has

quelled concerns. Orano committed to putting \$1 million annually into community projects near Zuuvch-Ovoo, whose pilot site welcomed 670 visitors in 2023—herders, students, and NGOs, to whom the company strove to explain the mining process. “There were a lot of rumors at the start about animals dying,” says a herder’s wife, Tsevelmaa Narantogtool, as she plays by her ger with her 3-year-old son, Irmuunbileg, proudly showing off his Spider-Man pajamas. “But it’s been years now, and nothing has happened.”

To be sure, history is rife with examples of supposed progress whose real harms have not become clear until decades later. (To wit: climate





change.) No fewer are the examples of damage done by those who seek that progress, to peoples who live more in sync with the earth.

But it helps that Zuuvch-Ovoo is far from a conventional mine. The uranium deposit lies some two to five miles below the surface and is sandwiched between two thick layers of clay. This distinct geography allows in situ recovery, or ISR, a leaching process during which acidified water is pumped deep to the deposit via narrow, vertical tubes. The acid dissolves the uranium before being retrieved at the surface via a network of outlet pipes. The uranium is then removed and processed into yellowcake, a low-grade form with the claggy texture of spent coffee grounds. Eventually, this can be enriched into fuel rods.

It's in theory a "closed loop" process where vital groundwater is completely sealed from possible contaminants. What's more, there's no gaping quarry, pit tunnels, diggers, noise, dust, or choking diesel emissions. The only evidence of this "mine without a mine," as Orano likes to put it, is a network of stumpy pipes poking out of the surface of the desert, through which camels and horses can wander just as before. While mining operations occur across a concession of some 35 acres, only a tiny section used for production facilities and crew housing is fenced off.

Still, the project has been dogged by controversy. In 2018, French prosecutors began investigating Orano for alleged bribery of a public official in Mongolia involving a third-party consulting firm. (Orano says it is cooperating with the ongoing investigation.) The French anti-nuclear network *Sortir du Nucléaire* has criticized the leaching process for the quantities of acid used, and in 2018 a group of Mongolian citizens filed a complaint against Badrakh Energy, alleging a spike in livestock malformations as well as cancers and miscarriages nearby. In response, Orano points to independent monitoring by Mongolia's Academy of Sciences that found no discernible impact to local water, soil, air, or vegetation.

**'When it comes to resources and energy, when is geopolitics not involved?'**

—ORCHLON ENKHTSETSEG, FORMER MINING EXECUTIVE

That hasn't stopped traders and rival herders from leveraging the mine to barter down the price for local animals. "People say our meat is toxic because of the uranium," says Munkhsuuri Dambadarjaa, 41, a herder who grazes his 1,500 cows, horses, sheep, goats, and camels next to Zuuvch-Ovoo. "But if so, how come we are still alive?"

Nuclear power and the mining projects necessary to fuel it will always have detractors. However, the Gobi's increasingly problematic winters have inadvertently served as a propaganda tool. During the harsh season, herders now bring their animals to the plant's gates to ask if they can shelter inside. "We have to say no, it's an industrial facility," says Enkhtulga Gantulga, a sustainability and community-affairs manager for Orano. "But it shows acceptance has completely changed."

The herders have always contended with *dzuds*, severe winters that arrive after summer droughts and trigger widespread animal death. But global warming has exacerbated this phenomenon. Average temperatures in Mongolia are already 2°C warmer than at the start of the 20th century—more severe than the global average—meaning drier weather, more frequent dust storms, and sparser grasslands for grazing animals to acquire the fat necessary to survive longer winters. This year was a particularly bad *dzud*, which affected over 90% of the country and killed over 4.7 million animals as pastures were buried in snow and ice. At least 2,250 herder families lost over 70% of their livestock. When *TIME* visited Zuuvch-Ovoo in February, the adjacent land was strewn with frozen gazelles and cows, tongues protruding in grim rictus. The frequency of *dzuds*





STUDENTS AT THE ULAANBADRAKH SCHOOL, WHICH WAS RENOVATED WITH ORANO'S SUPPORT



THE SPIRITUAL ENERGY CENTRE, FOUNDED IN 1820 BY MONGOLIAN POET DULDUITYN DANZANRAVJAA

SARANGEREL TSETSEGEE, RIGHT, AND VISITORS IN HER GER, CLOSE TO THE URANIUM MINE

has brought home to Mongolia's rural population what has become irrefutable to its urban dwellers: that the climate crisis is deadly, and clean energy vital to mitigate its ravages.

Mongolia's coal addiction is especially perverse considering the bounty of clean power at its disposal. Whereas coal last year accounted for over half of Mongolia's total \$15.2 billion export revenue, the hope is that future mining projects can enhance, rather than impair, quality of life. Orano says running Zuuvch-Ovoo will require only 12 megawatts (MW) of electricity, of which 5 MW will be generated by harnessing the heat produced by the on-site sulfuric acid plant. The remaining 7 MW will, it says, likely come from a nearby wind farm. "Orano's business is to produce decarbonized energy, so we need to be consistent," says Marc Meleard, CEO of Badrakh Energy.

Along with subterranean uranium deposits, the Gobi also offers tremendous solar and wind potential. Back in 2011, Softbank CEO Masayoshi Son even proposed an Asian Super Grid linking China, Japan, South Korea, and as far south as Singapore to solar and wind farms blanketing the Gobi. Although such grandiose plans have stalled, Mongolia remains committed to becoming a net-zero economy by 2050 and hopes to set international standards for responsible resource exploitation. "The journey is just starting because

of the global decarbonization shift," says Orchlon Enkhtsetseg, a former mining executive who founded renewable-energy startup URECA. "So how do we put in policies now so that Mongolia is positioned as the most economically competitive place to buy renewable energy from?"

Yet competition also brings challenges. Orano is 90% owned by the French government, and Thoumyre insists Zuuvch-Ovoo "will certainly contribute to the energy security of Europe." But Mongolia's uranium requires processing at one of the dozen or so enrichment facilities around the world—and the closest are in Russia and China. Even if Orano wanted to ship elsewhere, Mongolia's geography necessitates using Chinese ports. Oyun-Erdene insists "our two immediate neighbors do not interfere in our domestic affairs." But few believe Mongolia would be immune to pressure if the West's relations with Moscow and Beijing continue to deteriorate. "When it comes to resources and energy, when is geopolitics not involved?" asks Enkhtsetseg pointedly.

Recent experience also makes mining a contentious topic in domestic Mongolian politics, especially as parliamentary elections approach in June. "Resource development is probably the biggest dilemma that we're facing as a country," says Amarjin Nemekhbayar, an adviser to the chairman of the opposition Democratic Party of Mongolia. As commodity prices soared in the early 2000s, Mongolia briefly became the world's fastest-growing economy, earning the sobriquet "Minegolia." Prospectors from across North America and Europe quaffed single-malt in upscale Ulan Bator nightspots. But the mineral boom was short-lived, and in 2017 Mongolia went cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund for a \$5.5 billion bailout.

Mongolia boasts significant deposits of gold, copper, phosphorus, zinc, and lithium, as well as coal and uranium. The impetus is to "not repeat the mistakes of the past," says Oyun-Erdene. "It is very important to go step-by-step." Whereas Mongolia spent profligately during its previous mining boom, Oyun-Erdene says future revenues will be "put into a sovereign wealth fund and used to expand other sectors like agriculture and tourism so that we can diversify our economy."

Past missteps also mean Orano's joint venture has been closely scrutinized. Orano boasts a 90% stake in Badrakh Energy with 10%



owned by Mongolia, reducing state liabilities, though that smaller slice will be “preferred shares,” receiving prioritized dividends and “guaranteeing over 50% of the global benefits of the mine go to the people of Mongolia,” says Thoumyre. Meleard estimates Mongolia’s share at over \$2 billion over the project’s lifetime. October’s accord between Orano and Erdenes Mongol LLC was signed inside the Elysée Palace in Paris in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron and Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh. Yet despite this backing, the investment agreement remains stalled after two separate heads of the relevant working group were transferred to other posts. “We had to restart nearly from scratch,” Meleard sighs wearily. “Maybe we’ll have more chance after the election. It’s quite difficult to read.”

**ORANO HAS SO FAR** plowed \$250 million into its Mongolia operation without earning a cent. Since 2006, it has launched over 300 projects including new community centers for herders and planting 20,000 native saxaul bushes to combat desertification. In the nearest town of Ulaanbadrakh, last year alone Orano helped renovate the hospital, meeting hall, museum, and school, which has 226 students 8 to 14 years old. Orano purchased 14 computers for the school in 2016 and is about to replace them for the third time. Touring the dozen immaculate classrooms, flanked by trophies and crayon drawings of Bart Simpson, the head teacher asks the tidily dressed children if they’ve heard of Orano. “Yes, it bought the minibus!” shouts one student. “The whiteboard!” chimes in another. “And the books!” says a third. The teacher uses our visit to make a spirited argument for why her charges also need tablets.

In the Gobi, Orano operates as almost a state within a state; when the local governor needs something, he doesn’t approach the cash-strapped central government, he goes directly to the mine. TIME saw a petition from the Mongolian military asking Orano for funds to repair the border fence. The seemingly endless flow of cash has engendered a sense of dependence and, perhaps inevitably, resentment.

“The French are penny pinchers; the Chinese mine gives a lot more,” complains herder’s wife Sarangerel Tsetsegee, seated by a cauldron of boiled beef bones in her brightly painted ger, as she picks gristle off a cow femur with a knife. Her gripe is that Orano contributed to the government’s emergency fund to provide hay during the *dzud* instead of doling out cash. “You should give the money directly to the herders!”

While you might expect the boss of a multibillion-dollar mining venture to travel by private jet or helicopter, Meleard chats with TIME on the rattling Soviet-era train he takes every few weeks for the 10-hour trudge between the Gobi city of Sainshand and Ulan Bator. He doesn’t begrudge due diligence, but his frustration is palpable. By comparison, Orano also entered Kazakhstan the same year



YELLOWCAKE—  
A MIXTURE OF  
URANIUM OXIDES—  
AT THE ZUUVCH-  
OVOO URANIUM MINE

as Mongolia and by 2005 was selling that uranium on the international market. Today, Orano extracts as much uranium in a single day from its Kazakh mine as the Mongolia pilot project produced across its entire 18 months of operation. And even that uranium still sits within 120 black drums inside shipping containers at Zuuvch-Ovoo, since Orano hasn’t been granted an export license.

Meleard admits that were Orano a private rather than state-owned firm, it probably would have abandoned Mongolia long ago.

“It’s already 27 years with only expenses,” he says with a Gallic shrug. “It’s really too long.” Such delays are “very specific to Mongolia,” he laments, as our train rolls out of Sainshand station.

Behind us, Danzanravjaa’s cosmic portal and its ethereal promise of Shambala fades into the gloom. But the prospect of a better tomorrow springing from the Gobi feels very real and very close—if only today can first be secured. □



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# NEXT GENERATION LEADERS

11 trailblazers who are challenging the status quo,  
leading with empathy, and forging solutions for a brighter future





Ncuti Gatwa  
is poised for  
global renown  
as he steps into  
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franchise



U.K.

**NCUTI GATWA**

Mold-breaking actor

BY NAINA BAJEKAL/LONDON

WHEN NCUTI GATWA GOT THE CALL THAT WOULD change his life, he was walking into a London barbershop. The Rwandan-born Scottish actor froze as his agent shared the news: he had just been cast as the lead in the beloved British sci-fi series *Doctor Who*. This wasn't just another job—it was something that would cement his place in British cultural history. He told his agent he'd call back. "I hung up and didn't think about it for a week," he recalls when we meet two years later on a cool spring day in East London. "I was like: I've got laundry to do, I've got the gym to go to, I can't think about this life-changing thing you've just thrown at me."

*Doctor Who*, which has been running on and off since 1963, is something of a national treasure in the U.K. Some of Britain's most celebrated actors have played the Doctor, a time-traveling alien who explores the universe in a spaceship known as the TARDIS, which resembles an old British blue police box. The Doctor defeats evil creatures and rights wrongs across time and space—and can "regenerate" when fatally injured, allowing a new actor to step into the role. Though taking on such an iconic part was a no-brainer for Gatwa, now 31, it was also overwhelming. He describes himself as "an anxious, anxious mess" while filming: "My first day walking on set, I saw the TARDIS and it just hit me. This is *the* British TV program. I cannot fail."

Failure isn't exactly a word you'd associate with Gatwa. We first met nearly five years ago on the set of Netflix's *Sex Education*, where his nuanced performance as Eric Effiong, a colorful, quick-witted teen navigating his sexuality and religion, won him critical acclaim. Gatwa credits the character with teaching him to be braver—"just learning to be unapologetically myself, to embrace flaws and strengths as well."

Those strengths have since become visible to millions. He made his debut as the Doctor in an anniversary special last December, and recently appeared in Apple TV+'s *Masters of the Air* and as a Ken in Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*. He took the stage at the Oscars alongside Ryan Gosling, and even appears in the airline safety video that plays on the flight I take to London to meet him.

Now Gatwa is the first queer Black person to lead the world's longest-running sci-fi series. It's a new



era in other ways too: in May, the show premiered in more than 150 markets—and in 25 languages—as part of a new partnership between the BBC and Disney to turn the show into a global franchise. "That's really powerful," says veteran screenwriter Russell T. Davies, who revived the series to critical acclaim in 2005 and returned as showrunner in 2023 amid dwindling ratings. *Doctor Who* now has the potential to reach more viewers than ever—and higher expectations along with it.

For Davies, there was never any doubt about Gatwa being up to the task. He says it took mere minutes of watching Gatwa's audition tape to persuade him, along with BBC and Disney executives, to cast Gatwa. "Suddenly there was a man in front of me being funny and lighting up the room when he smiles, and then being sinister as hell and commanding the room," Davies recalls. "He was absolutely astonishing. I just remember thinking: This is it, this is it, this is it."

**IN THE WORLD** of *Doctor Who*, a single moment can alter the course of history. Gatwa experienced something similar in his own life when, a few years ago, he was on the brink of quitting acting altogether. Gatwa, whose family left Rwanda for Scotland when he was 2, says he was drawn from a young age to the transformative element of acting. At 18, he went to study acting at the





Gatwa and his co-star Millie Gibson in the new season of *Doctor Who*

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where he received full financial assistance and remembers being one of just two students who had to work alongside their studies to make ends meet. (He handed out flyers for an LGBTQ+ club in Glasgow, later working as a go-go dancer.) After graduation, Gatwa spent years working in theater, including performing in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Shakespeare's Globe in London.

He hit a low in 2017, after a theater tour in America. "The phone just stopped ringing," he says. He took odd jobs but the bills piled up; before he knew it, he'd lost his apartment. Months of barely scraping by led him to seriously consider returning to his hometown of Dunfermline to work at the local Tesco supermarket. "You have to let this go, it's not sustainable," he recalls telling himself.

Just as he was about to give up on his dreams, Netflix came calling. "I got *Sex Education*. I know, I know," he says, still marveling at the twist of fate. At the time, he had no idea what it would mean for his career—and was instead focused on finally being able to pay his friends and family back. The show was a runaway hit, and Gatwa used his newfound wealth to buy a house in South London; he is also starting a project to build a school in Rwanda. But while his career has taken off, the broader industry has been in turmoil. With streaming platforms contracting and diverse

shows being particularly affected by cancellations, it's easy to imagine that a show like *Sex Education* might not get greenlighted today. Gatwa agrees that there is a slow backsliding toward "old formulas that work, less diversity, less pushing for different stories to be told."

Gatwa is focused on maintaining momentum in an industry where losing it can be fatal to a career. He spent weeks in the winter of 2022 filming the final episodes of *Sex Education* while shooting his first season of *Doctor Who*. That came off the back of filming *Barbie* and the *Doctor Who* specials. "I don't think I even had three days off, and I was exhausted," he says. "It was like, gym, work, food, bed; wake up at 4, push-ups, lines for the day."

Though Gatwa doesn't want to push himself quite so hard again, it's not easy to relax into his success. "Because I've been homeless, I don't think I'll ever not wake up and check my bank balance or whether there's food in my fridge," he says. Such anxiety is unsurprising in a precarious industry. It's also partly why, Gatwa says, so many Black and brown parents encourage their children to become doctors or engineers rather than pursue risky careers in the arts. And when it comes to diversity on- and off-screen, Gatwa says nepotism remains a powerful force in getting a foot in the door. "It's crazy to me that we're still seen as a risk," he says. "I am a Black man, and I've just been cast as the lead in the most British of shows. But it's groundbreaking *because* it's the first time, because it's happening now, because you don't see it anywhere else."

Reaching milestones like these—especially for a long-running show like *Doctor Who*—can bring out the darker elements of society. When Gatwa's casting was announced in May 2022, everyone braced for racist and homophobic responses—including the BBC, which put security outside his family members' homes. After the harassment John Boyega and Kelly Marie Tran experienced following their casting in *Star Wars*, it wouldn't have been the first time racist fans of a beloved genre property came out of the woodwork en masse. Ultimately, the backlash was small. "There were those people, but I would say the love drowned them out," Gatwa says. "Sorry, losers!"

**AS MUCH AS GATWA** wants to give voice to broader issues, he also hopes his turn as the Doctor will be remembered for more than just breaking barriers. "Those firsts matter," he says. "But I also just want people to see me as a f-cking sick Doctor, who was really fun and smashed it."

If early reactions are any indication, he's on his way to doing just that. Critics have praised Gatwa's performance as a refreshing, dynamic force that elevates the show to new heights. Gatwa describes



his Doctor as action-focused, energetic, and unafraid of a stunt, but also deeply empathetic. “He’s emotionally available and unavailable,” he says, constantly flying away from his problems. “He’s not afraid to cry, he feels a lot. He’s cheeky, he’s quite flirty, and unafraid to use his charm to get what he wants.”

It’s a characterization that Gatwa crafted with great care, immersing himself in old episodes to identify each Doctor’s unique traits and analyzing his scripts with all the rigor of his drama-school training. He drew particular inspiration from Jon Pertwee’s action-hero energy in the 1970s and David Tennant’s charismatic liveliness in the 2000s. Drawing from his family’s experiences of conflict in Rwanda, Gatwa felt a strong emotional link to the Doctor’s origin story as the last survivor of a planet destroyed by war. He was also intrigued by the Doctor being something of a “public loner.” “The Doctor has traveled the whole universe and is friends with everyone,” Gatwa says. “And yet no one really knows him.”

Gatwa has similarly had to navigate the delicate balance between maintaining privacy and opening up. During his photo shoot for *TIME*, Gatwa poses effortlessly, jokes around with the crew, and dances along to Beyoncé in between shots. “If you put me in nice clothes and put lots of nice makeup on me then I’m very happy,” he tells me with a grin. (Gatwa is known for his chic, playful looks, from sharply tailored suits to a gleaming silver chest-plate at the Oscars; he describes his personal style as somewhere between Ken and the Doctor.)

Adjusting to other aspects of his fame has been harder, as “pockets of anonymity” become increasingly rare for the self-described introvert. Davies underscores the intensity of the role. “God, it’s so hard to be the Doctor, especially in the U.K.,” he says. “It’s such a public role, and you’re adored by children. That’s a very specific and unusual thing.” Part of the shift for Gatwa has been grasping that he’s not simply doing a job—that the characters he plays have real power. “Now I understand that something [I’ve] done might have touched someone’s heart or made them feel safe or less lonely.”

Gatwa hopes to get into producing, inspired by the wonderful experience he had on set for *Barbie*, which was directed by Gerwig and produced by Margot Robbie. “We need a lot more creatives making decisions in our industry,” he says.

Davies, meanwhile, has no doubts when it comes to Gatwa’s future. “Imagine where he’ll be when he’s 40,” he says, adding that he’s in an unusual position after filming two seasons of *Doctor Who*, while everyone else is only just witnessing Gatwa’s performance. “I feel like I’m on the edge of the volcano, and the whole world is about to see it explode.” —*With reporting by Julia Zorthian*



**Kenya**

## **BETH KOIGI**

Finding water for everyone, everywhere

**BY JUSTIN WORLAND**

The U.N. estimates that more than 1.8 billion people across the planet live in communities under drought conditions. The cost to the global economy measures in the tens of billions of dollars.

But despite the global nature of the problem, Beth Koigi, 33, knows that tackling drought will require local solutions.

In 2017, along with Canadian environmental scientist Anastasia Kaschenko and Oxford economist Clare Sewell, she founded the social-enterprise company Majik Water with the goal of making clean drinking water accessible in arid and semiarid regions across her native Kenya—where half the population lacks access to clean drinking

water—and around the world. Instead of focusing on large infrastructure projects, Koigi’s organization gives local communities direct access to water in their backyard.

“The water-scarcity issue is becoming bigger and bigger,” says Koigi. “The world is looking for decentralized water sources.”

Majik, pronounced “magic,” relies on technology that at first blush does seem almost magical: a filtration system that pulls water from thin air. Her atmospheric water generators (AWGs) draw humidity from the air, condense it, filter out any bacteria and add essential minerals for drinking water. The system runs on solar power, allowing for installation in remote areas. And it works virtually anywhere, including places with relatively low humidity. “If you have air, you can have drinking water,” the group’s website states.

The approach isn’t entirely new. For centuries, humans



have harvested water from fog. More recently, the U.S. military has explored devices like Majik Water's to source water in challenging environments. Koigi emphasizes that Majik Water's success isn't just about the technology, but rather envisioning a variety of ways to apply it.

The company started by working with NGOs that bring Majik Water devices to communities after natural disasters to provide emergency services. Those function as essential sources of sanitary water for rural hospitals, while the company's smallest devices can be used in households.

More recently, Majik Water has started working with local entrepreneurs on the ground in Kenya. Those individuals place the devices in busy shops and markets, providing access to everyday consumers who can pay to use the system. Working directly with people across Kenya not only allows the company to grow its footprint faster, but also supports the economies in these communities. "We are empowering a person to earn an extra income," she says.

Koigi's work comes just as a startup ecosystem is burgeoning in Kenya. Combined with the severity of water issues in East Africa, Koigi sees a significant opportunity to expand.

"It's a very big starting point," she says.

Despite the inventiveness of Majik Water's air-to-liquid technology, Koigi stresses that she isn't running a technology company that will simply rapidly scale its core hardware. To grow in the long term, she says, the company will need to work with local communities to identify all of their local water challenges and help fix them.

"We want to become a company that offers holistic solutions," says Koigi. "Water issues depend on the context."

Gaza

## MOSAB ABU TOHA

A poet documenting war

BY YASMEEN SERHAN

The first time Mosab Abu Toha witnessed an Israeli airstrike, he was 7 years old. "I was decades younger than war," he wrote years later in a poem, and "a few years older than bombs." Now an acclaimed Palestinian poet and writer, he draws on his experiences growing up in Gaza in much of his work: In one poem, he describes escaping death at age 16 when a piece of shrapnel got lodged in his neck, narrowly missing his windpipe. In another, he tells of his first experience of war as a father and the fear his three children felt as bombs rained down.

Since Oct. 7, Abu Toha, 31, has emerged as an evocative chronicler of the ongoing war—from his experience living under Israeli bombardment in northern Gaza to his family's efforts to flee to the safety of neighboring Egypt. Midway through their journey, he was abducted by Israeli soldiers who he says blindfolded and beat him. ("Detainees are treated in line with international standards," the Israel Defense Forces told TIME.) When Abu Toha was released days later, he wrote a poem about that too.

From Mahmoud Darwish to Edward Said, some of the most notable Palestinian figures are writers and poets—something Abu Toha says is no accident. Before 1948, most Palestinians were farmers. After the establishment of the state of Israel and the war that ended with more 700,000 Palestinians fleeing or expelled from their homes, many lost their livelihoods.

"When the Palestinians lost their lands, they started to invest in education. Education is the only thing that we can control."

For Abu Toha, poetry is more than just a mode of expression; it's a bulwark against erasure. "Writing a poem is an act of resistance against forgetting—not only forgetting the story or the experience, but also the feelings that come with that experience," he says. It's also a means of sharing

with those far beyond the besieged enclave where he grew up—something he hopes to do with his second poetry collection, *Forest of Noise*, when it is published later this year.

While Abu Toha currently resides in Cairo with his family, he says returning to Gaza is a matter of when, not if. "Gaza is my home," he says. "And even if our house continued to be a heap of rubble, I would—with so much love—be living there."







Japan

## SHUNSAKU SAGAMI

CEO for the future

BY CHAD DE GUZMAN

"I'm not quite sure how I feel about my wealth," one of Japan's youngest billionaires tells TIME from his office in Tokyo. "But I continue to work hard to create good businesses."

Shunsaku Sagami, 33, owes his fortune—*Forbes* recently estimated his net worth to be \$1.9 billion—specifically to the business of

helping other businesses.

"From a young age," he says, "I wanted to be a person who could solve problems in the world."

One problem Sagami saw in his own life was the challenge of corporate succession in a country where the old vastly outnumber the young. Sagami has spoken often of his late grandfather, who ran a

real estate agency in his hometown of Osaka but was forced to shutter the business when he retired and couldn't find someone suitable to take it over.

After selling a startup, in 2018 Sagami founded M&A Research Institute, a mergers-and-acquisitions advisory firm that harnesses artificial intelligence to match buyers and sellers. The firm specializes in connecting aging owners and CEOs of small and medium-size enterprises with successors, so that they don't have to follow the same disappointing path his grandfather did. "The aging

problem in Japan is serious—I think it is the most serious in the world," Sagami says.

In 2019, Japan's government estimated that by 2025 over 1.25 million small-business owners would be 70 or older and lack a succession plan, with unsuccessful turnovers forecast to put about 6.5 million jobs at risk and a dent in Japan's economy—the fourth largest in the world—of more than \$100 billion.

Sagami's firm similarly estimated last year that about 620,000 profitable companies in the country are at risk of closure because they have no successor.

That's where Sagami's unique AI-powered match-making system comes in. He takes pride in working quickly and charging clients only after a deal has been made, unlike industry peers that charge up front, and whose services he deems too slow and inefficient. And so far, M&A, which was publicly listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange in 2022, has seen tremendous success.

The company, which now has more than 300 employees and is working on some 400 deals at any given point, has done so well that it diversified last year into asset management at the request of clients who sold their businesses and needed help managing their newfound wealth. Sagami is also eyeing international expansion for the main brokerage business—as he knows Japan is far from the only country dealing with the problem of heirless businesses.

"The fact that my company's matching service is independent of language is its strength," he says. "If I have the chance, I'd like to use the services M&A has developed here in Japan and help other countries in similar ways."

—With reporting by Lillian Loescher/Osaka



Australia

## LAURA AND JORDAN O'REILLY

Tireless disability advocates

BY JEFFREY KLUGER

Laura O'Reilly of Sydney was none too pleased in 2008 when she found out her little brother Shane was literally being warehoused. Shane, then 18, suffered from quadriplegic cerebral palsy and spent his days in a care facility where he was ostensibly receiving occupational therapy. Laura, then 22, came to visit him to bring him a change of clothes at the address she'd been given and was stunned to find a whitewashed warehouse with a group of clients inside, all idling in wheelchairs. Separately, off to the side, the staff was busy with lunch.

"I remember going up to [Shane] and saying, 'Mate, what's happening?'" Laura, now 38, recalls. "He said, 'We're just waiting. Then we're gonna do art.' I just remember thinking why would he be doing art? He didn't have the dexterity to hold a paintbrush."

That turned a wheel in Laura's head—and in that of her other brother Jordan, now 35, as well. In 2011, Jordan and Laura launched Fighting Chance and Hireup, a pair of web-based networks that find housing, training, care teams, and more for people with disabilities and their families across Australia.

The need is acute. Nearly 1 in 6 people has a disability. That's 4.5 million Australians, 34,000 of whom have cerebral palsy. The condition alone costs the nation of 26 million people \$1.47 billion for treatment and care each year, a third of which is paid for by patients' families. Through their platforms, the O'Reillys are making a meaningful dent in that, providing caregivers and financial support for more than 11,000 families—and they are looking to blow past the 25,000 marker as early as 2025. In 2021, Laura was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for outstanding service to the disability sector, and last June, Jordan received the honor too.

"Laura and I said, 'Let's get involved,'" Jordan says. "Let's create service and create the kind of life Shane and others deserve."



They are doing that—and much more. Sadly, Shane himself did not live to see the contribution his big sister and brother are making. He died in 2011, at age 21, of severe sleep apnea related to his condition.

"It was extremely traumatic," says Jordan, "but off the back of that we decided just to throw ourselves into this work. It is incredibly inspirational to see just how powerful Shane was in his own small and humble way."



Chile

# MATIAS MUCHNICK

Using AI to revolutionize food

BY WILL HENSHALL



If you were to take a sip of NotMilk, a plant-based whole-milk replacement made by Chilean food-tech company NotCo, you might wonder how it tastes so creamy.

It's not fat from nuts or oats, as with other replacements on the market. The secret, says Matias Muchnick, NotCo CEO and co-founder, is a mix of pineapple and cabbage. When processed correctly, the unlikely union of tropical fruit and leafy vegetable reacts to form lactones, which help give NotMilk a milky flavor and scent.

NotCo did not stumble across this combination through brute-force trial and error, says Muchnick, 35. Rather, his team uses artificial intelligence to discover unlikely pairings that mimic the tastes of

animal-based foods using plant-based ingredients. "There is a complete world of ingredients that, in their combinations, we have no idea as human beings how they can react, or what they can create, when mixed together," he says.

As more people, himself included, began to understand how what they eat affects their bodies and the planet, Muchnick spied a way to turn his passion for food into a business opportunity. He founded his first venture, a plant-based-mayonnaise vendor named the Eggless Co., in 2012 in Santiago, Chile. "It was the garage story," he recalls, fondly, of the company's humble start.

The mayo project taught him how the consumer-goods industry works, and

after selling the company in 2015, he was eager to try again. He went to the U.S. to take executive education courses at the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard Business School. At the latter he met computer scientist Karim Pichara, with whom, alongside plant geneticist Pablo Zamora, he founded NotCo. The company grew rapidly, and in 2021 it became the first Chilean unicorn, raising \$235 million at a valuation of \$1.5 billion. In addition to NotMilk, the company sells a range of plant-based products including NotBurger, NotChicken—the flavor of which is partly provided by another unlikely duo, tomato and strawberry—and a plant-based version of the Latin American sweet favorite, NotDulceDeLeche.

Muchnick attributes NotCo's success to the AI tools his team has built, which he says are at the core of the company's work. NotCo uses AI to design mixtures of molecules to produce desired tastes, textures, smells, and colors. This AI system, along with others NotCo has developed, allowed the company to create a plant-based custard in three months in partnership with ShakeShack—a problem the chain had spent years trying to solve, says Muchnick.

While NotCo is not yet profitable, Muchnick hopes the business will turn an operating profit later this year. As for the future of plant-based food, Muchnick believes that only by becoming "ultra-obsessed" with customer experience can the sector graduate to the mainstream.

"It's the experience that's king, and the only way that we're going to get that \$10 billion industry, that today might be niche, into the trillion-dollar realm."

U.K.

# RAYE

Openhearted songwriter

BY MOISES MENDEZ II

As a teenager, RAYE attended the BRIT School, a legendary South London performing-arts academy that has bred successful songwriters and recording artists like Jessie J, Adele, and Amy Winehouse. These days, RAYE is regularly compared to Winehouse, but back then she remembers walking through the hallways, looking at pictures of the alumni, and thinking, "That's gonna be me one day."

At the 2024 BRIT Awards, she earned her place in those hallowed halls. RAYE, born Rachel Keen, made history at this year's ceremony in March as the most nominated







artist at the U.K.'s biggest music-awards show. She then went on to break the record for most wins in a single night by collecting six awards, including the evening's biggest prize, Album of the Year. Among the previous record holders the 26-year-old waltzed on past are Adele, Harry Styles, and Blur.

"That night felt like it was a lucid dream, it was just so surreal," she says, looking back. "I think the only part where I felt truly at peace was during the performance. I was so proud of it," she says of her show-stopping medley, which included three songs and a sneak peek at some new music coming down the pike.

Long before she arrived on that stage, RAYE's love of singing was inspired from a young age by her parents: her Ghanaian-Swiss mother and

English father were heavily involved in their church, where RAYE's mother sang in the choir and her father served as musical director. After two years at the BRIT School, she dropped out at 16 and spent the remainder of her teenage years learning how to write songs professionally in studio sessions on the weekends. In the early stages of her career, she wrote for Little Mix, Ellie Goulding, Charli XCX, and even Beyoncé, first on her *Lion King* soundtrack *The Gift*, in 2019, and again on a track, "RIIVERDANCE," from the artist's acclaimed recent album *Cowboy Carter*. (RAYE won't divulge any details from the experience, shrouded as Beyoncé albums are in secrecy, other than to call it "incredible.")

In February of last year, RAYE released her debut album, *My 21st Century Blues*, a project that showcases her ability to seamlessly blend influences from pop, R&B, and doo-wop. The openhearted, autobiographical album, which landed on several best-of-the-year lists and would earn her all those BRITS one year later, was a hard-won triumph after years of conflict with Polydor, the label with which she parted ways after they allegedly refused to put out the album she had recorded. When she finally released it independently, it spawned a viral TikTok hit, "Escapism," which cracked the *Billboard* Hot 100 for the first time in her career.

The need to prove herself may once have been daunting, but now it drives her. "That very much becomes a part of your psyche. What fuels me to work as hard as I do is to prove those people wrong. Getting into a room with men, who are experienced and talented, asking 'Who are you?'" Her answer is simple: "Give me the mic and I'll show you."

U.S.

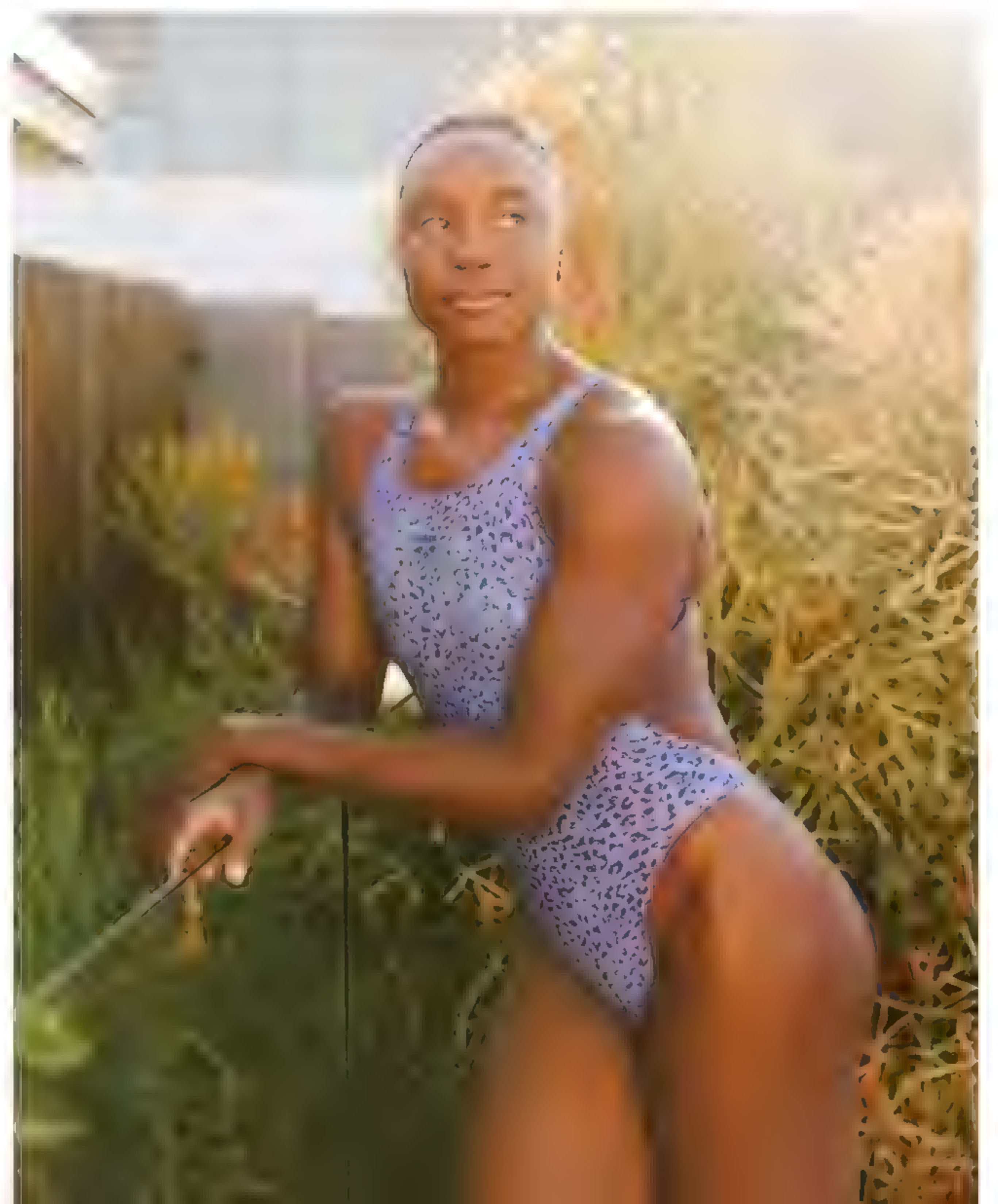
## SIMONE MANUEL

Champion for inclusion

BY ALICE PARK

Growing up, Simone Manuel was used to being the only Black swimmer on the pool deck. "There was a feeling of loneliness," she says. When she beat the field in the 100-m freestyle at the 2016 Olympics, she became the first Black American swimmer to earn an individual Olympic gold. After making history, her swimming journey became challenging in a different way. She didn't make the team in that event in 2021 because of overtraining syndrome, after repetitive, intense training brought her body to its breaking point. She was forced to reduce nearly all physical activity to recover.

That experience put her trailblazing role into perspective. In 2023, she created the Simone Manuel Foundation





**U.S.**  
**MYCHAL**  
**THREETS**

Unquiet librarian

**BY OLIVIA B. WAXMAN**

Amid record-high attempts to ban books and a harsh reality of reduced funding and staffing, libraries have a great publicist. Meet Mychal Threets, 34, a librarian in Fairfield, Calif., who has amassed roughly 2 million followers across social platforms with his videos promoting the local institution as a friendly, under-rated neighborhood hangout.

Threets basically grew up in a library. For the home-schooled kid, the Solano County Library—where he would one day work—was a classroom. One of the first books he remembers reading with his mother is Maurice Sendak’s beloved Caldecott Medal winner *Where the Wild Things Are*. He loved it so much that he later got tattoos of its titular fanged creatures. “I’ve always found my mind wandering, almost like searching for the wild things,” he says. “The ‘wild rumpus’ is like a cry to do something. Let’s go on an adventure.”

Sporting tattoos on his left arm honoring not just Sendak but also Marc Brown’s *Arthur* series and illustrator Richard Scarry, his sunny expression framed by an Afro held back with a headband, he posts TikTok videos that guide young people to books he hopes will spark what he calls “library joy” and a lifelong love of reading. He also speaks to his adult audience, pointing them toward lesser-known library resources like free tax help, legal help, and rentals for video games, board games, and musical instruments.

But the videos that have contributed most to carving out his special corner of

the internet are the ones in which he shares memorable encounters with “library kids” and “library grownups.” In his most viral TikTok, which racked up about 22 million views and was shared by celebrities like Jennifer Garner, he tells a story about a kid at the library reading a book in Spanish to two other kids who wanted to read it but didn’t speak the language. In one of his PSAs, he explains how

to turn on a special font for dyslexic users in the popular free e-book app Libby. In an especially moving video, he talks about an unhoused adult and child who regularly come to the library to watch YouTube videos and laugh together, offering up a breach of quiet library code that he sees as a win—two people who see the library as a safe space to enjoy time together. But then, as he says of his videos’ viral

reach, he jokes, “For a quiet library voice person, I have a very loud voice on the internet.”

Many of Threets’ TikTok videos are about mental health and his own struggles with anxiety, depression, and panic attacks. He hopes that because of his openness about these subjects, people facing similar challenges will feel less alone, and remedies like taking medication will be destigmatized (a message he





reinforced in an April video in which he shakes an orange pill bottle and exclaims, “Live, laugh, Lexapro!”). They might even take a page out of his book and go to the library to take their minds off their troubles for a while. In fact, it was an excursion like this that opened up a door to his career: When he was especially depressed as a young adult, in 2012, he would go to the Fairfield library to try to figure out his next steps. One day, he asked a librarian there for a job—a step so seemingly simple they don’t bother to suggest it in most self-help books, but one that set him on the path toward becoming the librarian he is today.

After a decade-long career at that library, Threats stepped down earlier this year to deal with some mental-health challenges. While he has been attacked by trolls on X (formerly Twitter), he denies reports that cyberbullying had anything to do with his decision. Library workers regularly deal with harassment from patrons, so much so that he says, “If I were going to leave because of bullying, I would have left years ago.” Now, he hopes to dedicate his next chapter to advocacy, working to promote libraries nationwide. Named PBS’s resident librarian in February, he’s been making videos for social media with iconic characters, with many of his fans online billing him as a spiritual heir to LeVar Burton, of *Reading Rainbow* fame. There is even a Change.org petition calling for a TV reboot of that show with Threats as the host.

Whatever his medium might be, one of his chief messages is to dispel the notion that all librarians are strict schoolmarms in cardigans telling people to be quiet. As he puts it, “I love the children’s library section where there is noise—that means kids are having fun.”

Thailand

## CHONTHICHA ‘LOOKKATE’ JANGREW

Activist turned politician

BY KOH EWE

**Chonthicha “Lookkate” Jangrew has lost count of the number of times she’s been arrested while participating in Thailand’s pro-democracy movement since a 2014 coup. But no charge—from sedition to illegal assembly—has stopped her from protesting the country’s conservative royal- and military-linked government.**

**Last May, Lookkate was back on the streets, but this time it was to hand out campaign flyers as a parliamentary candidate for the Move Forward Party. The upstart progressive party sought to transform the energy of years of pro-democracy activism into real political power through the 2023 national election.**

**“I have to say that I never**

**thought of being a politician at all,” says Lookkate, 31. But, she adds, “I realized one thing: if we want to make a sound, we cannot only make change on the street. We also need to get into power, and use this power to make a change—to build a society that we want to see.”**

**In a victory that stunned most of Thailand and observers around the world, Move Forward emerged as the biggest vote getter, winning a plurality of 151 seats in the 500-member House of Representatives by appealing to a broad swath of youth and urban voters. Political newcomers like Lookkate became lawmakers, but the conservative establishment ended up preventing the party from forming a**

**coalition government. Its Prime Minister candidate failed to get the support of the military-backed Senate, and it has since faced legal challenges, including the threat of dissolution over its push for monarchy reform.**

**Now, Lookkate uses her official capacity as a member of the opposition to advocate for human rights and social equality. She’s joined committees on refugee aid and helped to draft labor reform, and she’s continued to fight for freedom of expression, introducing an amnesty bill for thousands of activists charged or imprisoned for political reasons over the past two decades.**

**While the future of Move Forward—as well as that of Thailand—remains uncertain, Lookkate wants to show the country’s youth that the pro-democracy movement will persist.**

**“What we, as people in power, right now have to do,” Lookkate says, “is to keep their hope alive.”**





HEALTH

# your toxic life

AN INDEPENDENT  
LAB HAS MADE  
A BUSINESS  
OF EXPOSING  
WHAT'S REALLY  
INSIDE EVERYDAY  
PRODUCTS

BY JAMIE  
DUCHARME

*Scientists at Valisure  
in Connecticut test  
consumer products  
for toxins*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADRIENNE GRUNWALD FOR TIME







If you are newly suspicious about the safety of the products in your medicine cabinet, there's a good chance you have Valisure, a tiny laboratory in New Haven, Conn., to thank. Or blame.

Over the past five years, Valisure's team of about a dozen scientists has detected potentially cancer-causing chemicals in widely used medications, hand sanitizers, sunscreens, anti-perspirant body sprays, dry shampoos, and—most recently—acne treatments. When Valisure sounds the alarm about a new scary-sounding finding, a flood of headlines, lawsuits, and product recalls often follows. The company is shattering the illusion that some 80% of Americans still believe: that the products they buy have been through enough safety testing to be proved not harmful.

"Most consumers assume that because it's for sale, it must be safe," says Teresa Murray, who directs the consumer watchdog office at the nonprofit U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG). "Oftentimes, that's very much not true."

Despite its nearly \$7 billion annual operating budget, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) isn't analyzing every shampoo or supplement on sale at your local drugstore. In fact, the FDA does not approve most cosmetics before they hit shelves—let alone assess how they'll affect human health after years of regular use. This information vacuum has given rise to a network of nonprofits, consumer-protection groups, and independent scientists dedicated to informing the public about potential hazards lurking in their products.

Within this group, Valisure has been uniquely effective at grabbing attention. Its testing has led to product recalls from household-name brands, congressional testimony, and partnerships with big-name organizations like the U.S. Department of Defense. But Valisure—the underdog that built its reputation as a crusader for public health—has made enemies too. Critics and regulators have denounced its testing methods and the legitimacy of its scientific findings, raising doubts about the very doubts the company has raised. So every time Valisure's results make the news, Americans are left to figure out how worried they should be.

**IN 2015, DAVID LIGHT**, a molecular biologist, heard from his friend and former Yale University classmate Adam Clark-Joseph about a problem with his medication. Every so often, Clark-Joseph said, he got a batch that triggered side effects and sent his chronic condition into relapse. He said his doctors mostly shrugged off these incidents as unfortunate



quirks of a health care system where supply chains are so complex that quality assurance is difficult. Light remembers being far more shaken than his friend's physicians.

"It was shocking to both of us to realize the FDA's not testing everything, and retail stores and pharmacies aren't doing the testing," he says. "So who's actually testing the product, as opposed to looking at the paperwork?"

Light and Clark-Joseph—now Valisure's president and head of analytics, respectively—co-founded Valisure in 2015 to fulfill that mission, setting up shop down the road from their alma mater. At first, Valisure quality-tested medications, then sold them through its own online pharmacy. But four years after its founding, Valisure made a name for itself in a splashier way.

In September 2019, Valisure's scientists used a "citizen petition," which everyday people can use to request action from the FDA, to announce they'd found the probable carcinogen NDMA in every batch of the heartburn medication ranitidine that they tested. Then lawyers brought a slew of lawsuits against GSK and Sanofi, pharmaceutical companies that have sold the





popular ranitidine drug Zantac, linking it to clients' cancers. (Many of these cases have been settled or dismissed.) In April 2020, the FDA asked all makers to pull ranitidine from the market.

The FDA has said that the recall was based on its own testing, not Valisure's. Though FDA tests did find elevated NDMA levels—high enough to trigger a recall—they were much lower than Valisure's. That's because Valisure used extreme testing practices, like exposing the drugs to heat, that may have actually produced NDMA, the FDA said in a response to Valisure's petition.

But to the public, a recall is a recall, and Valisure had been the first one to sound the alarm. The scandal boosted Valisure's reputation; Light still keeps Zantac-branded memorabilia in his office as evidence of his lab's impact.

In 2021, Valisure sold off the pharmacy business to focus on product testing. Mostly—thankfully—this business is a boring one. Valisure's clients are mainly organizations, like health care systems, that buy lots of medications and want to know what's in them. About 90% of the time, Light says, this testing is uneventful. But now and then, often operating on their own hunches,

his staff finds something concerning. Over the past few years, Valisure has found the carcinogen benzene in a variety of consumer products, including sunscreen, dry shampoo, and acne treatments, leading to major news cycles and, in some cases, product recalls.

A range of other groups work in this space. Experts from the Cosmetic Ingredient Review assess the safety of ingredients used in beauty products, with funding from the Personal Care Products Council, an industry trade group. The University of Kentucky's health care system also performs independent analysis of medications. But unlike Valisure, many of the other groups informing the public about products with questionable safety data—including the Ralph Nader-aligned PIRG, the Silent Spring Institute, Toxic-Free Future, and the Environmental Working Group (EWG)—are nonprofits. These groups have had made splashes too; PIRG was behind the 2018 discovery of asbestos in makeup sold at Claire's, leading to recalls.

"The more we look [at consumer products], the worse it looks," says Dr. Megan Schwarzman, associate director of the Center for Green Chem-

*Valisure has found potentially cancer-causing chemicals in dry shampoos, sunscreens, and more*

istry at the University of California, Berkeley. But, Schwarzman says, it's not always easy for scientists, let alone the average consumer, to understand what to make of the potential risks raised by these groups. "There's lead in pigments in lipstick," Schwarzman says. "If you wear lipstick once a month, it's probably not a big exposure"—but is wearing lipstick a few times a week enough to cause health problems over years or decades? Is the risk high enough to swear off lipstick altogether? What about other cosmetics? These questions are difficult even for scientists to answer.

It's also near impossible to isolate which chemical exposures, if any, are responsible for health problems, because "we are exposed to [toxins] at generally very low concentrations all the time," adds Debra Kaden, a toxicologist and principal consultant at the environmental-consulting firm Ramboll.

Given those realities, consumer-protection groups have their work cut out for them—which is an indictment



of the U.S. regulatory system, says Homer Swei, who oversees consumer-safety science at EWG. “It would be great if there was no need for organizations like this,” Swei says. “Why does a third party have to do the heavy lifting for industry and government?”

**THE FDA REGULATES** most things that Americans put on and in their bodies, but the scope of its oversight varies depending on the product. Pharmaceutical companies have to conduct complex clinical trials and secure FDA approval before bringing new drugs to market. Meanwhile, the agency’s regulatory structure for cosmetics stems from a law enacted in 1938—long before the average American was using up to a dozen personal-care products, potentially containing more than 100 chemicals in total, every single day.

A 2022 law expanded the FDA’s purview over cosmetics—it can now issue a mandatory recall and suspend manufacturing facilities if a serious issue arises—and some states have passed additional laws related to consumer protection. But experts say there are still huge holes in the ways many products are regulated in the U.S. Under the current structure, cosmetics companies can decide what sorts of safety and quality testing they want to do, which often isn’t adequate, Swei says. Brands don’t even have to submit the results of their testing in most cases. And, contrary to popular belief, the FDA rarely orders a recall; more commonly, it requests a voluntary one.

The FDA is also lenient toward potentially concerning ingredients, compared with regulators in other countries. Since 2009, Europe has required cosmetics makers to submit safety data before selling a new product. In 2023 alone, regulators in the European Union moved to ban 30 chemicals from use in beauty products—more than the FDA has banned from cosmetics in its more than 100 years in existence. Many known or

suspected health hazards, like formaldehyde and parabens, are still used in a variety of products sold in the U.S., such as hair treatments and lotions.

The FDA has implicitly acknowledged gaps in its approach—like in 2019, when it asked sunscreen manufacturers for more safety data. A spokesperson wrote in a statement that “the agency remains committed to using all available tools to oversee the safety and quality of FDA-regulated products.”

The question, for some, is whether Valisure should be one of those tools. Unlike nonprofit groups, Valisure is a business backed by private investors, which means its work has “got to make financial sense,” Light says. Valisure has lobbied for policies that would push companies to pursue the kind of independent testing that’s the bread and butter of its bottom line. “Any increase in the use of independent testing will benefit Valisure as a business,” Light acknowledges. But he maintains it would also be a win for public health. Personal-injury lawyers make a similar argument, saying their fees (routinely 30% to 40% of any damages awarded) serve as a market incentive to hold companies accountable.

In court filings, Unilever has also alleged that Valisure is motivated by money. Before filing a citizen petition related to benzene in dry shampoos, Unilever said, Valisure offered to test its products and keep the results confidential if Unilever paid more than \$1 million, an offer the company said it declined. And GSK and other companies have questioned Valisure’s relationship with plaintiffs’ attorneys, suggesting the lab works with lawyers to produce test results that will lead to juicy lawsuits. One of the first suits related to Zantac was filed by Light’s brother-in-law, an attorney in Florida. (Light says Valisure’s proposal to Unilever was taken out of context and the lab does not have inappropriate relationships with attorneys, including his brother-in-law, although its scientists sometimes serve as experts in cases.)

The FDA has criticisms as well. In a 2022 letter, the agency alleged that Valisure was using inappropriate methods and machinery for its tests. “Third-party testing using unreliable methods

Valisure  
co-founder and  
president  
David Light





produces unreliable data, and decisions based on unreliable data are not sound,” an FDA spokesperson wrote in a statement provided to TIME.

Consider Valisure’s recent finding of benzene in benzoyl peroxide acne treatments. For that testing, Valisure scientists analyzed what happened when benzoyl peroxide products were exposed to 122° temperatures for 18 days, conditions that the Personal Care Products Council argued have little real-world relevance. (Light, however, contends the test isn’t so far-fetched: “What if it sits in a warehouse in Florida for two weeks, or sits on a shelf in a store where their air conditioner broke?”)

Dr. Philip Landrigan, director of Boston College’s Program for Global Public Health and the Common Good, argues that the public has a right to know about any level of benzene contamination. “We know that it’s a carcinogen, even down to the lowest levels,” he says.

But Kaden, the Ramboll toxicologist, says much of the discussion about benzene doesn’t give consumers enough context. In 2022, after Valisure tests revealed benzene in sunscreens, Kaden and a colleague did their own analysis, concluding that people could be exposed to more benzene in the vehicle exhaust they’d inhale walking down a city street than by using a sunscreen contaminated with benzene at the levels Valisure found. Other researchers have also found that people who use sunscreen actually tend to have lower blood concentrations of benzene than nonusers, which suggests these products are not major threats.

Toxin exposure is never a good thing, Kaden says, but “the dose makes the poison.” Groups like Valisure, she says, don’t always make that clear enough in their messaging to the public.

Light, however, stands by his lab and its findings. In fact, he seems to enjoy the notoriety that comes with being the guy brave enough to take on the FDA and major brands. Framed articles about Valisure’s bombshell test results line the walls of his office and the lab’s lobby, and he proudly displays the mug he got from a 2023 visit to the White House, where he was invited to talk about product safety. “Some people like very straightforward

## Benzene discovery by Valisure: A timeline

2021



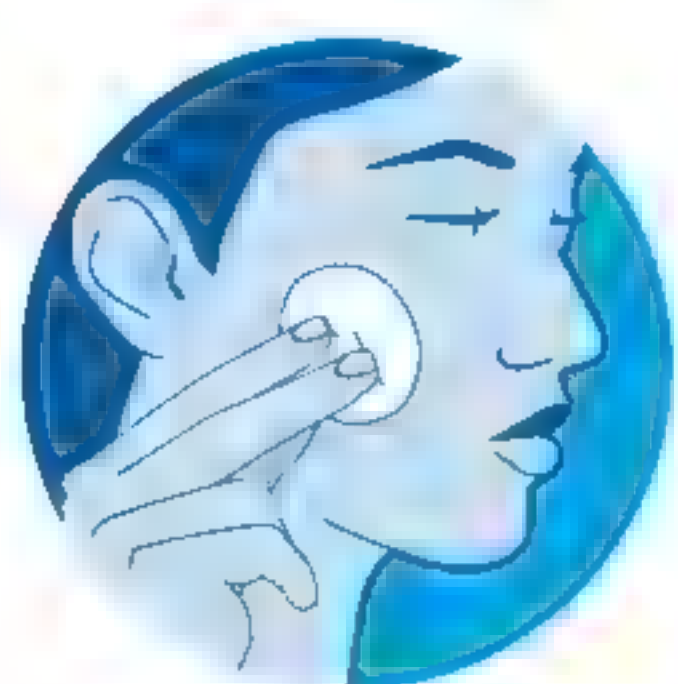
**SUNSCREEN**  
Valisure discovered benzene in sun-care products from 29 brands

2022



**DRY SHAMPOO**  
Valisure tested 148 products and found benzene in 60% of batches

2024



**BENZOYL PEROXIDE**  
Valisure found that all benzoyl peroxide products can degrade into benzene

spreadsheets and business plans,” Light says. He prefers the spotlight. “I’m an adventurous kind of guy, I guess.”

Sometimes, perhaps, too adventurous. During the summer of 2007, while a student at Yale, Light was arrested for firing a pistol into the ceiling of his fraternity house. Authorities reportedly found that Light—who was a gun enthusiast at the time—had numerous weapons, thousands of rounds of ammunition, and chemicals consistent with bomb-making in his room. (Light says the chemicals were not intended for illegal activity and notes that charges related to them were dropped.) He served about six months of a one-year prison sentence and eventually went on to finish his degree at Yale in 2011.

“I sincerely regret the events that occurred during my college years,” Light wrote in a statement to TIME. “I take full responsibility for my actions ... and since then have made a concerted effort to rebuild my life and contribute positively to society.”

**HOW POSITIVELY VALISURE CONTRIBUTES** to society is up for debate. The FDA, court system, and trade groups sometimes treat it as a nuisance, arguing its findings scare people without the science to back up the headlines. But the scientists who do similar work maintain that information is power—that even if consumers can’t pinpoint the exact moment at which exposure to benzene or NDMA or parabens becomes dangerous, they have a right to know it’s happening. “It’s up to everybody to decide for themselves the risk-benefit ratio,” Schwarzman says. “When you have the information, you get to do that.”

Under the existing regulatory structure, Americans probably wouldn’t get that information without independent labs and consumer-interest groups digging it up. Even finding details about product ingredients and news about product recalls currently requires a little effort on the part of consumers.

That may be changing. In addition to state-level efforts, U.S. lawmakers have in recent years introduced legislation that seeks to ban risky chemicals, improve transparency around supply chains and ingredient disclosures, and strengthen oversight of over-the-counter drugs. But for now, consumers are left to operate with imperfect products and limited information, says Kristin Knox, a data scientist at the Silent Spring Institute. In her own life, she’s tried to strike a balance between caution and panic, continuing to use mass-market products while also making tweaks like swapping plastic household goods for glass, choosing unscented products, and using fewer cosmetics. “That there are things you can do that actually reduce your chemical burdens is good news,” she says. “But it’d be even better if the products didn’t have bad chemicals in the first place.”

Ultimately, any independent actor, from Valisure to Silent Spring to PIRG, has only so much authority. They can break into the news cycle, which sometimes results in recalls and changes from manufacturers, but they’re not the ones making, selling, and regulating products. Systemic change is required, Knox says, for jobs like hers to become obsolete.

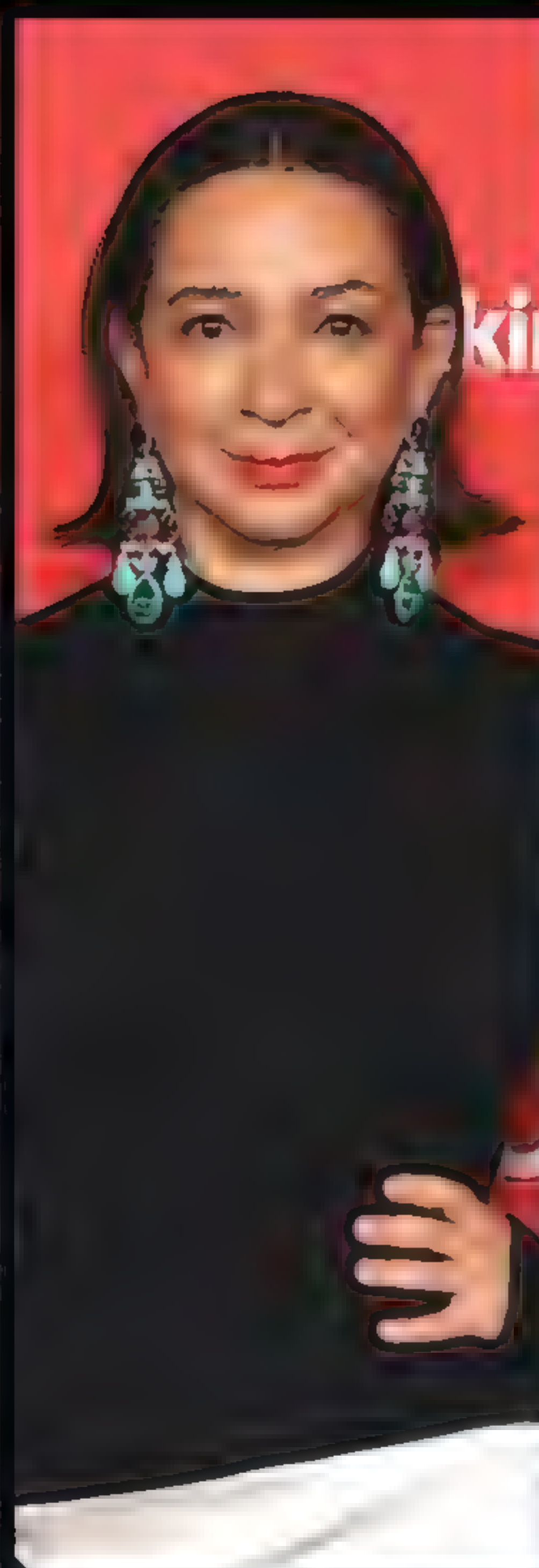
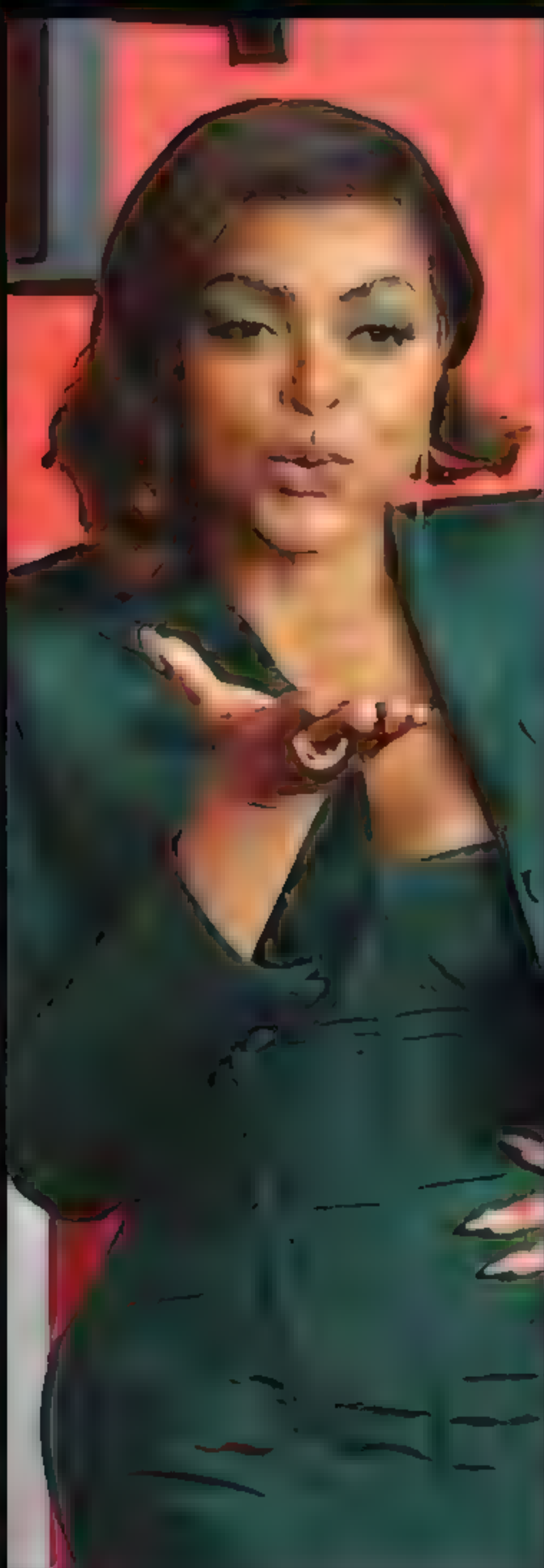
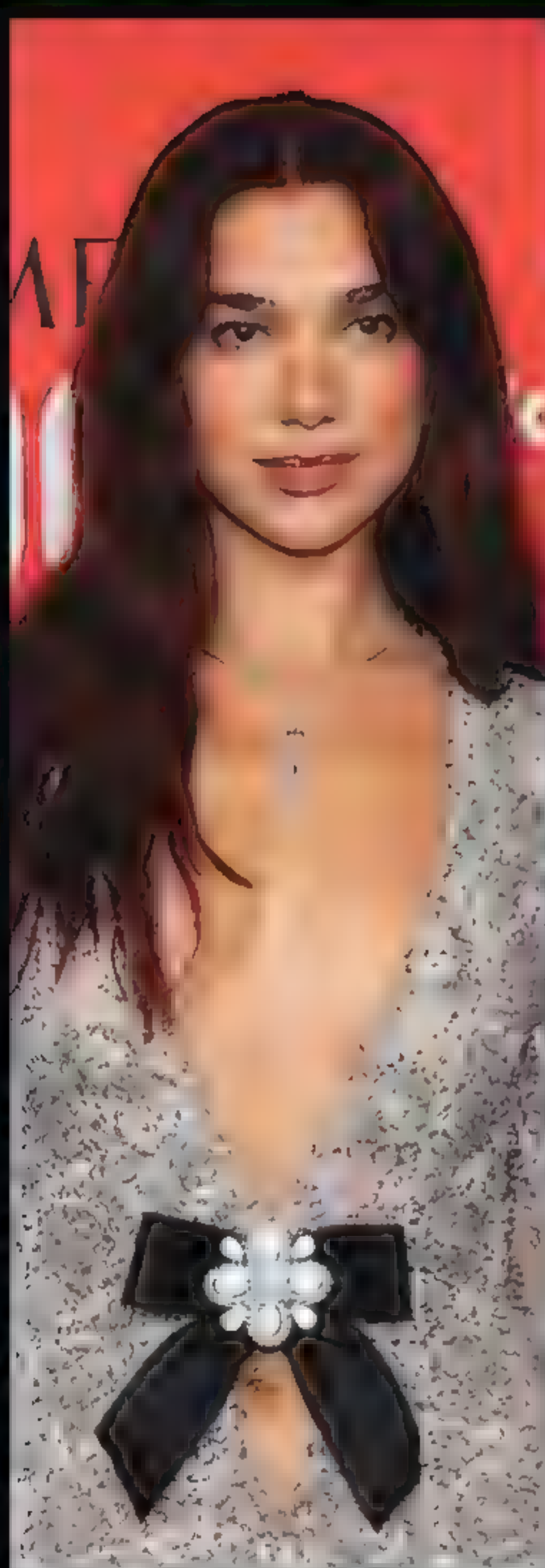
“Like most people, I [used to assume], ‘Oh, it’s in the grocery store, it’s been reviewed by the government, it’s safe,’” Knox says. “It would be nice to live in a place where that’s true.” □



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# Time Off



## TV'S ENDLESS HOLOCAUST

BY JUDY BERMAN

A surge of  
World War II dramas  
fails to connect  
with the present

INSIDE

GEORGE MILLER RETURNS  
TO THE WASTELAND

SOMETHING IS AMISS IN  
THE AMY WINEHOUSE BIOPIC

HANNAH EINBINDER ON HACKS,  
STAND-UP, AND SELF-PROMOTION



**W**HEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST, what images appear in your mind's eye? I see Nazis marching into city squares. Jews crushed into airless cattle cars. An iron gate with the inscription *ARBEIT MACHT FREI*, and beyond it, rows of spartan dormitories housing skeletal inmates in filthy striped uniforms, subjected to all manner of dehumanization. There are smokestacks, barbed wire, mass graves. These awful tableaux are the products of a life-long immersion in Holocaust narratives, from factual accounts in textbooks to visits to museums to documentaries screened at Hebrew school. But because I grew up in the era of *Schindler's List* and *Life Is Beautiful*, my most indelible impressions come from pop culture. When I envision a concentration camp, I am seeing a collage of movie stills.

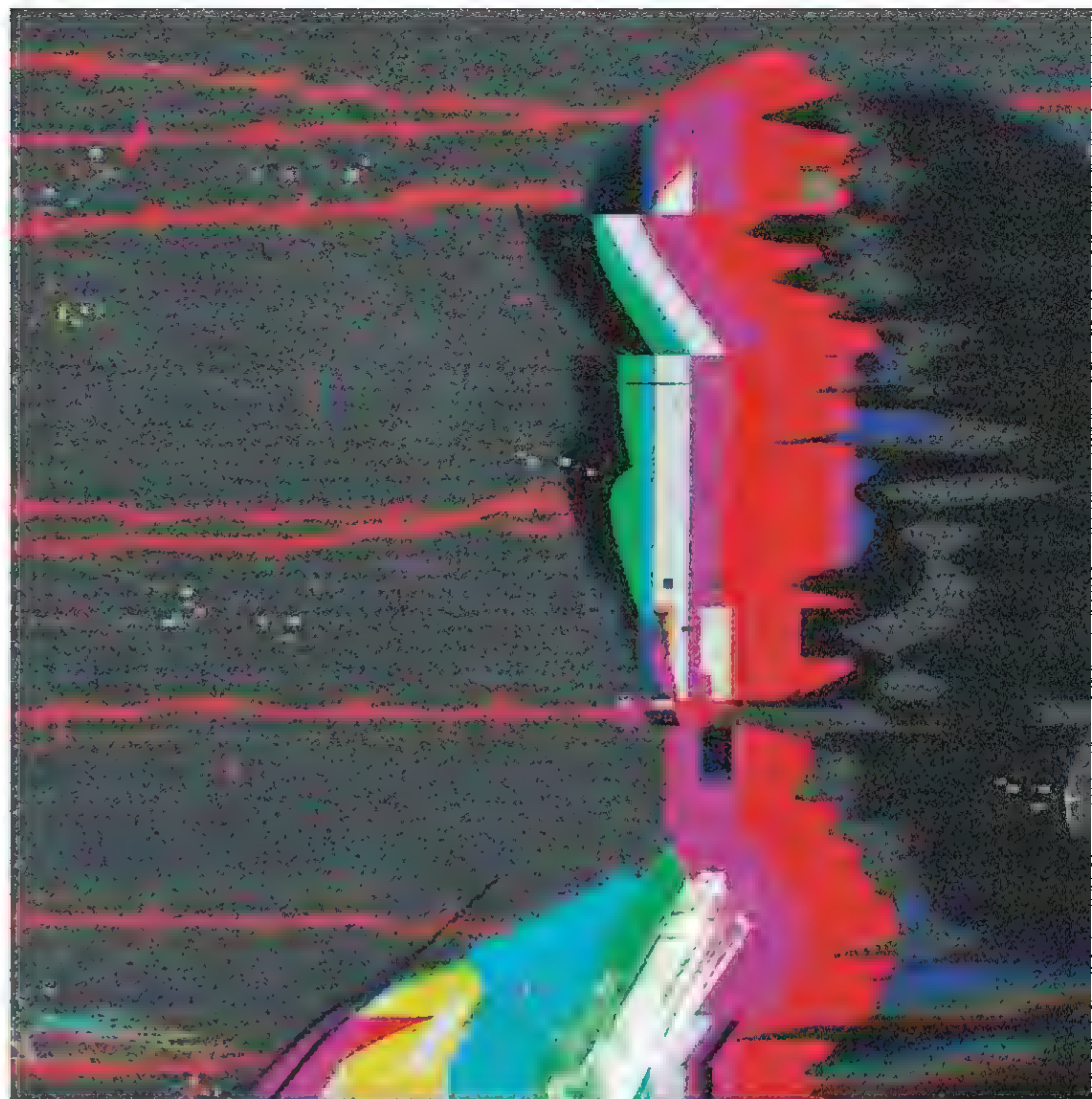
The same imagery suffuses *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, Peacock's new adaptation of Heather Morris' best-selling 2018 novel. Inspired by her conversations with Lali Sokolov, a Slovakian Jew who spent the final years of World War II tattooing ID numbers on new arrivals at the notorious death camp, it is ultimately, as Harvey Keitel's elderly Lali explains to Heather (Melanie Lynskey), "a love story." But that romance unfolds against a familiar backdrop of suffering that fits our broadest conceptions of the camps: sadistic Nazis; lines of naked bodies slouching toward death; Jews praying and singing to reassert their humanity.

*The Tattooist* is solidly made historical fiction, built on benign intentions and openhearted performances. It's also the latest and most generic example of a dubious TV trend: the Holocaust drama. While the genre dates back decades, the past year has seen an explosion of such shows, from *We Were the Lucky Ones* to *The New Look* to *Transatlantic*; *A Small Light* to *All the Light We Cannot See*.

Each of these series has its own angle. What unites most of them is an unwittingly exploitative repetition of imagery that long ago lost its power to shock and an adherence to tropes of heroism and villainy that abstract the Holocaust from any but the most anodyne political context: Nazis evil, Jews brave. This is a tumultuous moment for Jewish identity. Antisemitism and fascist ideology both are surging, while Jews weigh the morality of Israel's assault of Gaza. Yet these stories too often cling to sentiment and cliché. What we need from those narratives—political insight, introspection—remains elusive.

**IN HIGH SCHOOL**, I took two classes that happened to screen French New Wave filmmaker Alain Resnais's documentary *Night and Fog* just weeks apart. Released in 1956, the half-hour film exposed an international audience to photographic evidence of the multifarious horrors of the camps. The first viewing was as enlightening as it was harrowing. But the second felt obscene. I was staring at those same distressing images without learning anything new. I had to excuse myself after a few minutes.

Susan Sontag recounted a similar experience in her 1977 book *On Photography*. The cultural critic wrote that when she first encountered photos from the camps, at 12, "Something broke ... I felt irrevocably grieved." But gradually,



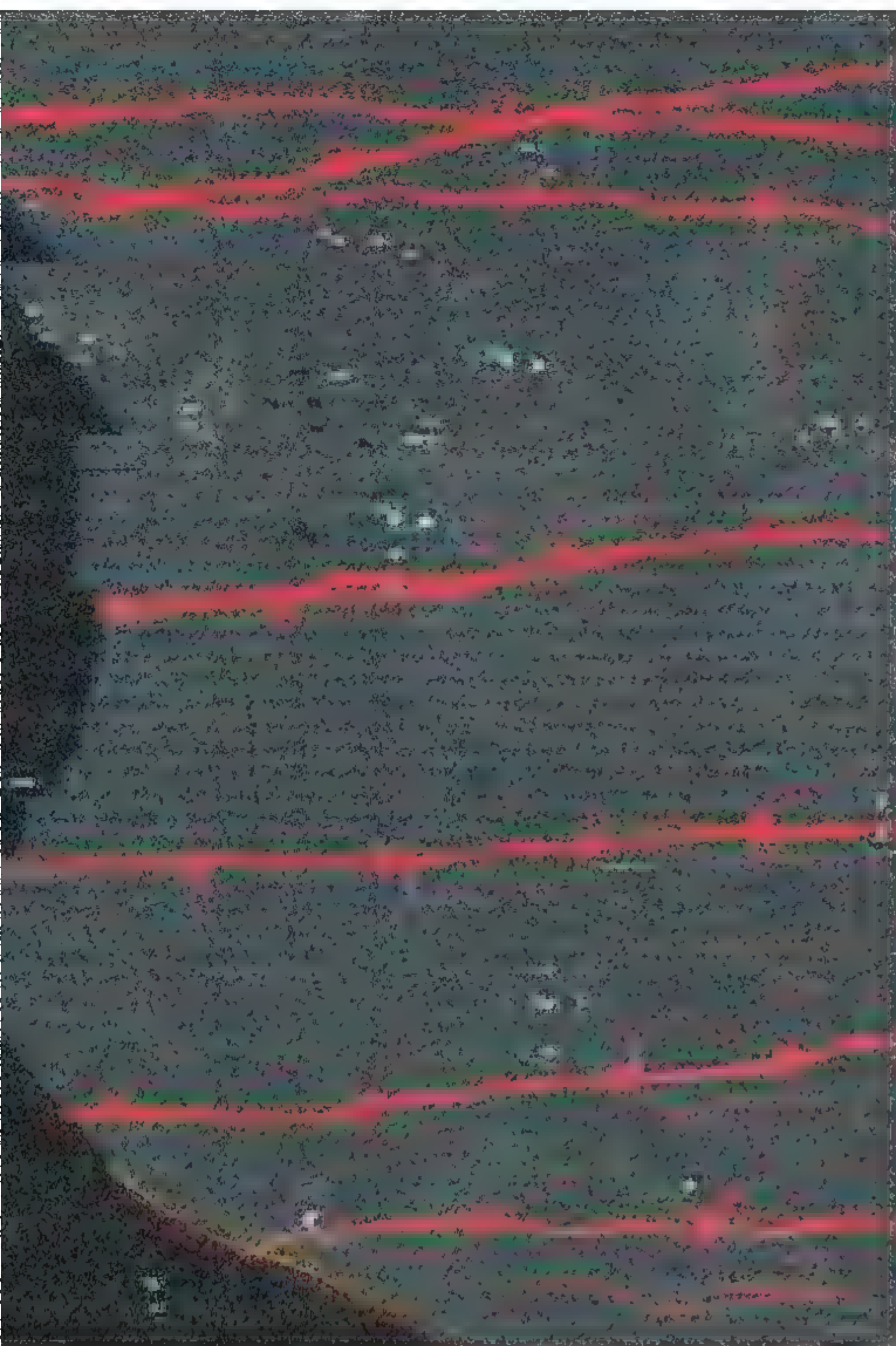
she grew inured: "After 30 years, a saturation point may have been reached. In these last decades, 'concerned' photography has done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it."

A half-century later, *The New Look* on Apple TV+, *Lucky Ones* on Hulu, and *The Tattooist*—all based on true stories and released in the past three months—cement a new era of supersaturation. *The New Look* is an origin story for Christian Dior (Ben Mendelsohn), whose struggle to free a sister (Maisie Williams) condemned to the camps for her role in the French Resistance is contrasted with the brazen Nazi collaboration of his rival Coco Chanel (Juliette Binoche). In *Lucky Ones*, a family of Polish Jews fleeing the Nazis endures years of separation and hardship. *The Tattooist* is the most conventional concentration-camp narrative of the three, framed by Lali's conversations with the author.

Although their plots diverge, the shows have strikingly similar emotional arcs and moral agendas. Each drags the viewer through endless suffering, whether behind the gates of Auschwitz or in a Soviet work camp or even in a Paris atelier where Dior must design gowns for the wives of the Nazi officers whose minions are holding his sister Catherine captive. At long last, the finales bring catharsis. Families and lovers reunite. Inspired by

**The  
morality  
that  
underlies  
these  
dramas  
tends to be  
simplistic**





Catherine, Dior reinvents French fashion for an exuberant postwar era. Careful to temper happy endings with somber tributes to the millions who died, the creators leave us to exult in the triumph of the human spirit over evil.

The morality that underlies these dramas tends to be simplistic. No one disputes that the Nazis are the bad guys. But that doesn't mean the Reich must always be represented by one or two conniving, midlevel psychopaths, plus dozens of faceless foot soldiers. The implication is that Germany during the Second World War was populated by millions of extraordinarily deranged individuals, rather than overtaken by a regime that normalized and incentivized genocidal hatred to such an extent that only Europeans of remarkable courage resisted.

**THE IMPRESSION THAT** the Holocaust was an anomaly, perpetrated by avatars of rootless evil, isn't just a comforting misapprehension—it's a dangerous one, blind to the systemic workings of authoritarian populism. The best recent representation of this phenomenon is *The Zone of Interest*, Jonathan Glazer's Oscar-winning film about the family of Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss (Christian Friedel). Instead of reproducing commonplace images, Glazer confines himself to this upwardly mobile home

that shares a wall with Auschwitz, gazing with disdain upon the perfect flowers Rudolf's wife Hedwig (Sandra Hüller) cultivates in her garden. That the Hösses are not remarkably evil is the point. They are beneficiaries of a system whose leaders mobilized the manpower to implement their Final Solution, in part, by fulfilling the frustrated ambitions of the Christian working class.

TV has not been entirely bereft of politically aware Holocaust histories. Viewed by 120 million people in the U.S. and exported around the world, NBC's 1978 miniseries *Holocaust* is like *Lucky Ones* if its central family weren't so lucky. When it isn't mawkish, it's stiff. Yet the presence of the gentile Erik Dorf (Michael Moriarty), an out-of-work lawyer with socialist sympathies who rises up in the SS to become a legal architect of the genocide, speaks to an understanding of the Holocaust as the product of a broken society seduced into fascism.

Last year, two TV series, Netflix's *Transatlantic* and Nat Geo's *A Small Light*, dramatized the stories of real people who fought against this extremist undertow. Set amid the brave souls who led the Emergency Rescue Committee, in Marseilles, *Transatlantic* was disappointingly shallow. Much more perceptive, *A Small Light* follows Miep Gies (Bel Powley), the heroic young woman who hid Anne Frank's family from the Nazis in Amsterdam. While she risks her life on a daily basis, not only with the Franks, but also in the Dutch resistance, the acquiescence of her friends to the Nazis' assault on their Jewish and queer neighbors horrifies Miep. It's the one TV Holocaust drama from the past several years whose profound insight justifies reimmersing viewers in one of humanity's lowest moments.

**"THIS REALLY HAPPENED"** continues to be the take-home message of most Holocaust series in 2024, as though *Holocaust* and *Schindler's List* (not to mention *Night and Fog*, Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Primo Levi's memoir *Survival in Auschwitz*, and Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*) haven't been part of Western pop culture for

decades. The only subtext that sneaks through: "We can't let it happen again."

It's an obvious conclusion, though it can be depressingly divisive once you start breaking it down—which is probably why most Holocaust TV declines to do so. Who, for one thing, is we? Is it individuals or governments? And what is *it*—the mass slaughter of Jews in particular or the attempted annihilation of any group of people based on their shared identity?

For contemporary art about the Holocaust to matter, it must engage with these questions, which are more central to Jewish identity than ever. On college campuses and in the streets, Jews find themselves on opposite sides of a conflict rooted in divergent interpretations of the Nazi genocide. Is the lesson of the Holocaust that Israel, a sanctuary state for the world's vulnerable Jewish minority, must be protected at all costs? Or that the global community must stop the violence of powerful states against disempowered communities like the one in Gaza?

Levi meditated on the universal political implications of the Holocaust in *Survival*, observing that "it is in the normal order of things that the privileged oppress the unprivileged." But despite its obsession with Nazis, television has yet to forge a thoughtful connection between this history and the matter that consumes the consciences of Jews in the present. With the exception of an empathetic season of *Transparent* that visits Israel and the West Bank, and a smattering of American and Israeli thrillers that too often stereotype Arabs as terrorists, the medium has, likely in its reluctance to offend, barely touched the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Maybe there are bold TV creators who are, right now, synthesizing the devastations of Oct. 7 and Israel's assault on Gaza into thoughtful art. If so, then the Holocaust will surely play a part—just as it has already informed a handful of stories that speak to our increasingly authoritarian moment. Whether for political or moral reasons, or simply in order to tell cathartic tales of resilience, we can't keep cordoning off history from a present to which it's so urgently relevant. □



## PROFILE

# On the road again with Mad Max's mastermind

BY ELIANA DOCKTERMAN

GEORGE MILLER HAS SPENT MORE THAN 40 YEARS swerving in and out of the postapocalyptic world of *Mad Max*. It's an unpleasant place: dry, barren, and violent, but Miller can't seem to stay away. And he had a compelling reason to return after 2015's hugely successful *Mad Max: Fury Road*. In preparing to bring that story to the big screen, Miller wrote not just one movie, but three.

The first film was, of course, *Fury Road*. The film introduced a new protagonist, Furiosa, a one-armed road warrior played by Charlize Theron. She betrays the dictator she serves, a man obsessed with big muscles and bigger car engines, by smuggling his wives out of their prison. Furiosa ended up eclipsing the franchise's titular hero, with Tom Hardy in the role made famous by Mel Gibson.

But in the nearly two-decade-long development process for *Fury Road*, Miller also sketched out two more films: an origin story for Furiosa and what happened to Max a year before *Fury Road*. Miller shared concept art for the Furiosa movie with Theron so she could better understand her character. "She said, 'Oh, gosh, can we do the Furiosa story first?'" Miller remembers. But that train had left the station—or in the parlance of *Mad Max*, that war rig had left the Citadel.

*Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* will finally debut on May 24, but with Anya Taylor-Joy replacing Theron as the solo lead—there's no Max in this movie. The prequel chronicles 16 years of its hero's life, from the moment she's kidnapped as a child from her idyllic home by the henchmen of a crazed biker named Dementus, played by Chris Hemsworth sporting a consciously comic prosthetic nose. (Miller's character names, which include Rictus Erectus and Doof Warrior, are rarely subtle.) Furiosa spends the rest of the movie trying to return to her native land, though she's occasionally distracted by fantasies of revenge.

Expectations for *Furiosa* are sky-high after *Fury Road* won six Oscars and became a cultural phenomenon: its high-octane action scenes, shot largely without CGI, were so original and unrelenting that the movie left audiences dazed. *Fury Road*'s shoot was legendarily long and troubled—there's an entire book chronicling the on-set feuds and chaos at the studio. Despite all that, Miller is upping the ante with *Furiosa*. He employed 200 stunt performers, topping *Fury Road*'s 150. And the new movie boasts a 15-minute sequence that took nearly nine months to shoot. "You can't anticipate how that effort will be apprehended," Miller says over Zoom from his native Australia. "It's in the hands of the audience now."

*Fury Road* is essentially a 120-minute extended chase sequence with almost no dialogue. *Furiosa* is structured more like a traditional hero's journey. The cars sometimes stop and park. The characters occasionally have conversations.

## AN ECLECTIC RÉSUMÉ

Miller's career spans many genres



### BABE

Miller wrote *Babe* and directed the sequel



### THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

Cher is a witch in this star-studded John Updike adaptation



### HAPPY FEET

Miller won an Oscar for the movie about dancing penguins



### FURIOSA

Anya Taylor-Joy leads the fifth *Mad Max* movie

Early reactions to the trailer critiqued the film's use of CGI. Some fans suggested Miller should have left his classic alone. But he couldn't. The script was there. With red-tinted glasses that wouldn't look out of place in the retro-futuristic world of *Mad Max* perched on his nose, Miller explains that he was determined to complete the story.

And that third film? The one that covers a year in Max's life before the events of *Fury Road*? It's tentatively titled *The Wasteland*, and Miller says it's ready to go. "Depending on whether *Furiosa* gets traction or not, that movie is on the horizon," he says. Will Hardy return to play Max? Miller smiles conspiratorially. "If the planets align."

**FURIOSA HAS BECOME** an iconic action hero, up there with John McClane and Ellen Ripley. It's hard to imagine anyone besides Theron embodying her. "With Charlize, the Venn diagram of actor and character overlapped a lot," says Miller. He briefly considered using technology to make Theron appear younger. "But the de-aging just wasn't working, even in the hands of really masterful filmmakers like Martin Scorsese on *The Irishman* and Ang Lee with *Gemini Man*," he says.

Miller would have made the film sooner, but he spent years tied up in litigation with Warner Bros. over *Fury Road*. The director claimed the studio hadn't paid his production company a promised bonus; the studio countersued because Miller delivered a 120-minute R-rated film instead of the 100-minute PG-13 movie he was contracted to make. (The suit went into arbitration, and Miller and WB are partnering again on *Furiosa*.) "By the time it came to it, we had to go with a younger actor," Miller says.

Taylor-Joy is a slither if equally mighty Furiosa. Miller asked the actor to send him an audition tape and let her choose from three monologues, including Peter Finch's famous speech from *Network* in which he unravels on air. Taylor-Joy recorded the anchor's ravings directly to camera. Though she would speak very few lines in *Furiosa*, she conjured the intensity





< Miller insisted the vehicles in *Furiosa* be functional, including a motorcycle that runs on a plane engine

because that would be a different story. It would have to be a woman.” And so *Furiosa* was born.

**MILLER HAS ALWAYS BEEN** a visual filmmaker. If *Furiosa* was conceived because Miller needed a hero to drive the war rig of his dreams, Max was born from grisly images Miller saw in real life. Before he became a filmmaker, Miller was an ER doctor who treated the victims of car accidents in rural Queensland where, in the 1970s, driving laws were lax and the consequences horrific. That gore inspired 1979’s *Mad Max*. Made on a shoestring budget, the production couldn’t afford a photocopy machine for the storyboard pictures. “I wrote out descriptions of every scene and every camera move for everyone working on the movie,” says Miller. “The screenplay was 274 pages long for a 90-minute movie.”

The film became a sensation. The original *Mad Max* held the Guinness World Record for most profitable movie of all time. Miller completed a trilogy with *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* in 1985. He took a detour into children’s films, including scripting the classic *Babe* and directing its sequel, *Babe: Pig in the City*.

When he was ready to turn to *Fury Road*, a series of calamities delayed shooting, from 9/11—and Miller’s decision in its aftermath to pivot to the Oscar-winning animated film *Happy Feet*—to a rainstorm that turned the barren desert where Miller had planned to shoot into a flowering oasis. The cast and crew filmed for 138 grueling days in the desert. Theron and Hardy have both said it was a frustrating and stressful experience: Theron has said they had no script, just pictures, and Miller responded to any direct questions about the plot with thesis-length answers. (During our interview he apologized multiple times for his lengthy, discursive responses.)

Miller describes *Fury Road* as an “anthropological documentary.” The audience catches glimpses of specific behavior, like soldiers called War Boys spraying chrome paint into their mouths. “We get the sense that the spray paint has a meaning to the boys,” says Miller. “But you have to pick up on the run because we never stop to explain.”

*Furiosa* fills in the blanks of *Fury Road*. And *Fury Road*, a movie with famously few lines of dialogue, left a lot of blanks. How did *Furiosa* lose her arm? You’ll find out. How was her war rig built? Get ready for a montage.

Part of what distinguished *Fury Road* from the other franchise films of its era was Miller’s refusal to weigh down the movie with lore. But Miller chafes at the notion that *Furiosa* could be accused of fan service. “In terms of choosing what to tell of her story, it wasn’t sitting down and making a shopping list,” he says. “It was character-driven.”

For all the dirt that Miller’s tricked-out motorbikes kick up, his films are ultimately character studies—and *Furiosa* is an indelible one. □

needed to convey the mentality of a survivor living in a depraved world.

It may seem bold that this franchise, defined by monster trucks and machismo, now has a female hero at its center. Fans spent years arguing about the message behind *Fury Road*. “There was a cohort of males who said, ‘Oh, you can’t have a female action hero,’” says Miller. “There was a cohort of feminists who said, ‘Why does she need Max at all?’”

But for Miller, choosing to make *Furiosa* the hero of a *Mad Max* movie was a practical decision, not an ideological one. “When you tell a story, you don’t say the story is going to be about this particular theme,” he says. He conceived *Fury Road* during a dream on a transpacific flight. But he needed characters to put inside the cars.

“In the case of *Fury Road*, I thought, ‘What if the MacGuffin, the thing everyone is chasing, were human?’ And that led to the wives being stolen from the warlord. And it couldn’t be a man taking the wives

**‘It’s in the hands of the audience now.’**



## MOVIES

## What does a biopic owe its subject?

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

AMY WINEHOUSE WROTE SONGS THAT CUT TO THE CORE of heartbreak, and sang them in a voice as supple and sturdy as raw silk. In her short lifetime she earned millions of fans, a number that has only increased since her death from alcohol poisoning in 2011, at age 27. She'd long struggled with substance abuse and mental-health problems, and there's evidence that those in her inner circle—people who stood to profit off her gifts—had failed her. No wonder those who love her feel protective of her even after death.

When the trailer for Sam Taylor-Johnson's biopic *Back to Black* dropped, Winehouse fans sprang into mother-bear mode. They claimed that the film looked cheesy, and that its star, Marisa Abela (from HBO's *Industry*), who did her own singing, looked and sounded nothing like Winehouse. Worst of all, the film had been made with the cooperation of Winehouse's father Mitch, the "daddy" who, in real life and in Winehouse's megahit "Rehab," had at one time deemed his daughter's use of alcohol—the addiction that would eventually kill her—nothing to worry about. Why make a film about Amy Winehouse at all? the fans demanded. She'd suffered enough. Why not just let her rest?

There's no clear answer to whether a troubled artist's life should ever become fodder for a movie. Taylor-Johnson had said she sought to celebrate Winehouse's music rather than fixate on the more sordid details of her life, and she's arguably pulled that off. But in its middling safeness, *Back to Black* is also a far less robust picture than Winehouse deserves. Its failures, and fans' anger about it even before they'd seen it, raise entwined questions: What does a music biopic owe its audience? More important, what does it owe its subject?

We have plenty of biopics about artists whose lives and careers were damaged by substance abuse: Kasi Lemmons' *Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody* (2022), starring Naomi Ackie, addressed the more controversial aspects of Houston's career with discretion and sensitivity, specifically her drug use and her longtime semisecret relationship with Robyn Crawford. As a reasonably accurate chronicle of Houston's life, the movie is effective and affecting. Other biopics, like Taylor Hackford's terrific Ray Charles biopic *Ray* (2004), starring Jamie Foxx, address the ways family members, producers, or managers can indirectly or otherwise enable an artist's substance abuse. One scene shows Charles jittery and high as a kite as he lays down "Night & Day" in the studio. The performance is incandescent, explosive—yet you don't want to think about the self-destructive habit that's fueling it.

Houston died at 48, less than seven months after Winehouse did. But her résumé, long and largely triumphant, more closely resembled that of Charles. Winehouse's brief career and wrenching death still feel like recent history.



Just watching footage of her clowning it up on a talk show, or giving one of many live performances of "Back to Black," her signature number—each time reinventing the song as a devastating act of death and rebirth—can make you feel a little raw. The sudden death of a performer can spark a peculiar mournful helplessness, only reinforcing the perception that we live in a world gone wrong.

***Back to Black* is respectful to a fault**

**THE FRUSTRATION** of Taylor-Johnson's film is that it represents a missed opportunity, that of making an essentially celebratory movie about Winehouse while also acknowledging thornier truths about her life. Abela's performance captures some of Winehouse's spitfire charm, and in her singing, it's easy to see she worked hard to re-create Winehouse's marvelous snakes-and-ladder phrasing, her mode of tossing a line off as casually as if she were flicking a cigarette butt into the night. There's something innocent and wrenching about the way she tells her on-again, off-again boyfriend and onetime husband Blake Fielder-Civil (Jack O'Connell), "I wanna be a wife, I wanna be a mum." Winehouse had





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*Abela as Winehouse: a missed opportunity to capture a complex life*

the case that Mitch Winehouse acted against his daughter's best interests more than once. In addition to keeping her from going to rehab at an early, crucial stage, he initially resisted getting her into treatment after a serious overdose of cocaine, crack, and alcohol in 2007, not wanting her to back out of her upcoming American tour.

Mitch Winehouse blasted Kapadia for Amy, asserting that he was working on a rival movie that would set the record straight. (He appeared in another documentary about his daughter, *Reclaiming Amy*, in 2021.) *Back to Black* somewhat redeems his reputation: Mitch is played by a wonderful and hugely sympathetic actor, Eddie Marsan, and he spends much of the movie looking pained as his daughter suffers—though, tellingly, he takes action only when she finally asks him to.

often indicated a yearning for that kind of security, maybe as a way of recreating the life at home she never had as a kid: Mitch left the family when Winehouse was 9, making a meaningful reappearance in her life only when she was poised for success.

*Back to Black* starts by introducing us to a North London girl infatuated with performers like Billie Holiday, Tony Bennett, and Thelonious Monk. But it also assumes the viewer already knows something about Winehouse's life: her bulimia, for example, a feature of her life since she was a teenager, is only subtly hinted at. (There's a carefully shot vomiting scene, but it could be read as the aftereffects of too much partying.) The movie captures the volatility of Winehouse's ping-ponging relationship with Fielder-Civil, but it presents him as a curiously neutral figure, not much worse than your average bad-boy charmer, when in fact he has admitted that it was he who introduced Winehouse, always a heavy drinker, to crack and heroin.

But the most questionable angle of *Back to Black* may come down to its depiction of Mitch. Asif Kapadia's superb 2015 documentary *Amy* makes

**YOU DON'T HAVE** to know every intricacy of Winehouse's story to sense something amiss here. Parent-child relationships are always complicated, and it's true that Mitch opened his daughter's life to music. A cabdriver and amateur singer, he was the guy with the records, introducing her to sounds she instinctively loved. But he's depicted in *Back to Black* as an agreeable, benign presence; the truth is almost certainly more complicated. Winehouse's fans feared that Taylor-Johnson's movie would sensationalize her anguish for dramatic effect. As it turns out, *Back to Black* is respectful to a fault. The best art allows its characters—fictional ones or those based on real life—the dignity of owning their choices, even decisions they made because they couldn't help themselves. As joyful as Winehouse could be, the somber facts of her life are interwoven with her legacy; they're part of her complexity, her sadness. To truly respect her, we have to be tough enough to accept them, to carry some of that burden for her. *Back to Black* lightens that burden for us—and that's precisely what's wrong with it. □

## NEVER LET THEM GO

Biopics about musicians are often divisive, but at their best, they capture the essence of our greatest stars. Here are four worth watching.



**TINA TURNER**  
played by  
**ANGELA BASSETT**

*What's Love Got to Do With It?* (1993)



**RAY CHARLES**  
played by  
**JAMIE FOXX**

*Ray* (2004)



**JAMES BROWN**  
played by  
**CHADWICK BOSEMAN**

*Get On Up* (2014)



**WHITNEY HOUSTON**  
played by  
**NAOMI ACKIE**

*Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody* (2022)



**CHINA WATCH**

PRESENTED BY CHINA DAILY 中國日報

# Flights of kites



An ancient folk craft tradition floats across time and still soars to new heights in modern times

BY CHENG YUEZHU

Many people hold at least one memory of a kite from their childhoods, be it a simple yet classic diamond or a colorful bird-shaped kind with vividly flapping wings. It could be a sunny spring day in a pastoral landscape with family members. As the wind picks up, the user runs as fast as he or she can, until the kite ascends high into the sky and dances in the air.

However, the kite that Yang Hongwei of Yangjiabu village in Weifang, Shandong province, remembers is slightly different. It was a gigantic dragon-headed centipede that stretched for 1,180 feet and took dozens of people to fly.

That was at the third Weifang International Kite Festival in 1986. To celebrate their village's legacy of crafting kites, her grandfather, Yang Tongke, and uncle, Yang Qimin, both master kite makers, envisioned and created a model 10 times bigger than any they had ever made.

Weifang is renowned as the "world capital of kites", and Yangjiabu village has long remained at the heart of local production.

Yang Hongwei, who was born to a family of artisan kite makers in the village in 1966, became a national-level representative inheritor of Weifang kite-making techniques this year.

Yangjiabu is home to two



Top: A girl flies a kite in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province on April 6. XINHUA Above: A dragon-headed centipede kite made by Yang Hongwei, a national-level representative inheritor of kite-making techniques in Weifang, Shandong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

national-level intangible cultural heritage items, kites and Yangjiabu new year pictures, a type of traditional woodblock printing used to decorate people's homes during Spring Festival.

Both art forms emerged in Yangjiabu in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and prospered in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), she says. "Our kites' decorations draw inspiration from new year pictures, each one carries its own story and auspicious connotations."

She took a variety of representative Weifang kites to the recent 37th International Kite Festival in Berck-sur-Mer, France, including a dragon-headed centipede kite with images of 100 children. The kite features a dragon head with a body and tail fashioned from about 50 discs,

each of which is hand-painted with images of children, carrying wishes for longevity, prosperity and other blessings.

"Throughout history kites have been close to people's daily lives and influenced by folk traditions," says Ma Zhiyao, a professor at Tianjin University who specializes in folklore and intangible cultural heritage.

"They have not only become embedded in folk culture but also provide entertainment and physical activity. This heritage has been passed down, demonstrating the enduring vitality of Chinese civilization."

Kites' origins can be traced back to the late Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), with historical accounts attributing their invention to the philosopher Mozi, who spent three

years crafting a wooden hawk, which is considered a prototype for today's kites. Later, Lu Ban, a master carpenter and engineer, made improvements by substituting wood with bamboo.

During the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) the inventor Cai Lun improved papermaking techniques, leading to the invention of "paper hawks", which resembled the kites we know today.

"Kites' origins reveal the remarkable ability and creativity of ancient Chinese to imitate nature and explore its mysteries," Ma says. "They observed birds and thought of using wood and paper to make objects that could soar in the sky. They were driven by curiosity and a spirit of scientific exploration to understand and harness the power of wind."

During the Tang Dynasty (618-907) relative stability and prosperity made paper more affordable, and kites became part of ordinary people's lives. As kite-making techniques became more refined, varieties adorned with imagery and that produced sound effects were developed.

In this period, too, kite flying during festivals became a custom. The late Tang-era poet Luo Yin wrote prose about a kite flying on the Cold Food Festival, which then fell directly before the springtime Tomb Sweeping Day and was later merged with it.

The custom was popularized in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). By the Ming and Qing dynasties,





Different styles of swallow-shaped kites with various patterns, colors and the symmetrical structure.  
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

significant progress was continuing in design, style, production, decoration and flying skills.

"Many literati liked to hand-make silk kites as gifts for their families and friends," Ma says. "They'd carefully select refined materials and then paint the silk cover by hand. These kites were exquisite and lasting."

One of history's most famous kite lovers was Cao Xueqin, a literary giant of the Qing Dynasty who wrote the seminal novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Kite flying was portrayed in the book as a pastime of the genteel protagonist family and was also used as a metaphor for characters' destinies.

In the book's 70th chapter a main character suggests kite flying to "let go of bad luck", a belief traditionally associated with kites.

"In the past, when it came to Cold Food Festival and Tomb Sweeping Day, kite flying was considered a key custom," Ma says. "After making sacrifices to ancestors, people would fly kites, which on one hand expresses thoughts about family members and on the other lets go of all unhappiness and ill omens."

"On Dragon Boat Festival, which was believed to be the most poisonous day of the year, people would fly kites, representing the shaking off of misfortune, so that family members could live long and healthy lives."

Weifang, Beijing, Tianjin and the city of Nantong in Jiangsu province are four areas celebrated for distinctive kite-making techniques. They all boast their own unique features yet share the same dedication to preserving, inheriting and promoting traditional artisanship.

Ma says the "four techniques" in kite making — crafting the frame from roasted split bamboo, pasting materials such as paper and silk onto the frame, painting images on the body and flying the kite — are a test of a person's temperament, patience and dedication. "From an item as modest as a kite, we can see Chinese people's attachment to the cultural values associated with happiness, positivity and health. This is why the thin string linking us to kites and culture has endured until today and remains a cherished part of contemporary life."

## Exhibition showcases ancient splendor

BY DENG ZHANGYU  
and LIA ZHU

A captivating exhibition at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco offers a clue to the vibrant Bronze Age cultures that flourished along the Yangtze River more than 2,000 years ago.

*Phoenix Kingdoms: The Last Splendor of China's Bronze Age* had an appreciative audience at the museum on April 19, showcasing more than 260 items of remarkable artifacts unearthed from aristocratic tombs in Hubei province.

The exhibition, running until July 22, was co-organized by the Asian Art Museum and Hubei Provincial Museum. It showcases a diverse range of objects: intricate bronze vessels, jade ornaments, musical instruments used in ancient ceremonies, and weaponry employed in battles. Lacquerware, a hallmark of luxury and refinement, also features.

Li Qun, director of China's National Cultural Heritage Administration, said that it is the largest show of cultural property China has organized in the U.S. in recent years and represents the magnificent and romantic allure of Chinese culture to the U.S. audience.

The show consists of five sections that vividly illustrate achievements in art, music, technology and design of the Zeng and Chu states, two vassals of the Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-256 B.C.) in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, a cradle of China's early civilization at the end of the Bronze Age.

The Zeng state's long and

splendid history was revealed by recent archaeological discoveries and their musical instruments, represented by the bronze bells, which astonished the world, said Jeremy Zhang, the museum's curator of Chinese art.

Jay Xu, director and chief executive of the Asian Art Museum and a specialist in early China, said: "We're witnessing a golden age of Chinese archaeology. *Phoenix Kingdoms* bridges the gap between myth and history, allowing visitors to come face-to-face with the past through these stunning artifacts."

Anne Kaahn, a docent of the Asian Art Museum, said it is such a rare opportunity for American audiences, because the artifacts, like textiles that were previously too fragile to be excavated or travel, can now be shared with the public.

One of the pieces that Kaahn recommends to visitors is the 16 writhing dragons that resemble snakes, which make up the base of a drum from the tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng (433 B.C.).

Other highlights include the ornament with a design of two raptors on a mask (2200 B.C.), the oldest piece on view.

The exhibition has drawn significant interest, attracting visitors from all walks of life. Huiqi Demke, 11, from Utah, said she is eager to learn more about Chinese history.

"I've been studying Chinese for five years, and I'm always fascinated by Chinese culture. This is an amazing opportunity to learn and share what I see here with my classmates."



From left: Visitors examine a cultural relic known as a *lei*, a type of ritual bronze object decorated with resting birds, at *Phoenix Kingdoms: The Last Splendor of China's Bronze Age*, at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. WU XIAOLING / XINHUA  
A volunteer introduces Chinese history to a group of students at the exhibition. LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY





## Hannah Einbinder The Emmy-nominated actor and comedian on *Hacks*, queer representation onscreen, and her debut comedy special, *Everything Must Go*

**In *Hacks*, you play Ava Daniels, a writer who grudgingly goes to work for a fading comedy icon. It's a very gay show. What do you think it offers queer viewers that isn't often seen in the media?**

It's by the queers for the queers. We're in charge of the stories and we write them and we also perform them, so they feel authentic and true to life because they just are. No one's guessing here at *Hacks*. We're speaking from experience.

**You have some qualities in common with Ava, namely your bisexuality and your career in comedy. Do you ever worry that people conflate the two of you?**

We do have some pretty on-paper similarities. But I know her intimately, and I feel like the character was so fully formed by the time I auditioned that I just see her as so separate. I definitely feel OK if people feel like she's real. That makes me feel like I'm doing my job.

**Do those similarities make it easier for you to lock into the character?**

For sure. I think [the same] for a lot of the actors on our show. We have queer actors playing queer characters in every instance. So it's nice for all of us to be telling our own stories. And as a comedian, it's nice to lock into that frequency that we share.

**What more would you like to see when it comes to queer storytelling onscreen?** I hope that there is more faith in trans representation and the ability for trans people to play themselves. *Monica*, starring Trace Lysette, is a great example of a film that was so incredible. It's just such a gorgeous piece of cinema that was indie and didn't have a lot of money behind it. So I would love to see more money behind these incredible queer stories and more

**Aging in showbiz is a major theme of the show. Has *Hacks* changed how you think about aging?**

I feel lucky to be a comedy girl and to be doing something that you can do at any age. I understand that we are in a very vain business. I feel good that as a stand-up comedian, you don't have to really look a certain way for the job.



queer people put in a position to author those stories.

**Jean Smart plays opposite you as stand-up stalwart Deborah Vance. Have any of your stand-up experiences informed her storyline?** So many of our writers are stand-ups, and the show touches on various reference points in Paula Poundstone and Joan Rivers and Phyllis Diller. For myself far less so than the women who came before me, but whenever I see the scripts, I'm like, "Yup." It's always pretty true to life.

**Deborah is the face of a QVC empire. If you had to sell one thing on the network, what would it be?** It would be a bamboo matcha whisk because bamboo is really sustainable. QVC is the pipeline to the landfill with all of these horrifying textiles that are purely waste. Plastic, polyester, etc. So I would choose a little tiny thing that you could put in your tea and then it would be a useful tool.

**Your first comedy special, *Everything Must Go*, comes out next month. What do you hope people will take away from the hour?** Like I took them on a little adventure. My stand-up is theatrical and it is mixed media. I explore a variety of performance styles, so I just hope that it feels different and that it feels like an escape, just for a little while.

**Has the character of Deborah taught you anything about comedy?** Never miss an opportunity for self-promotion. Folks, my special is on Max this June. *M-A-X*, like that guy from high school who played lacrosse. That's where you can see it. That's where it'll be. I'm there. Well, you know I'm there. I'm kind of the princess of that place. So yeah, June. We ride. —ERIN MCMULLEN





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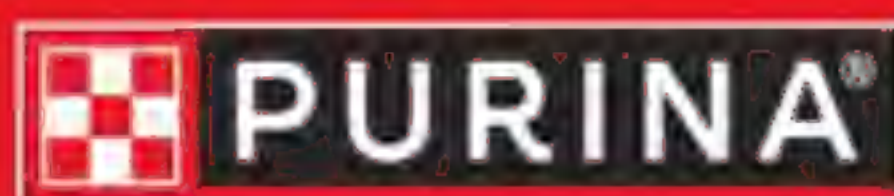
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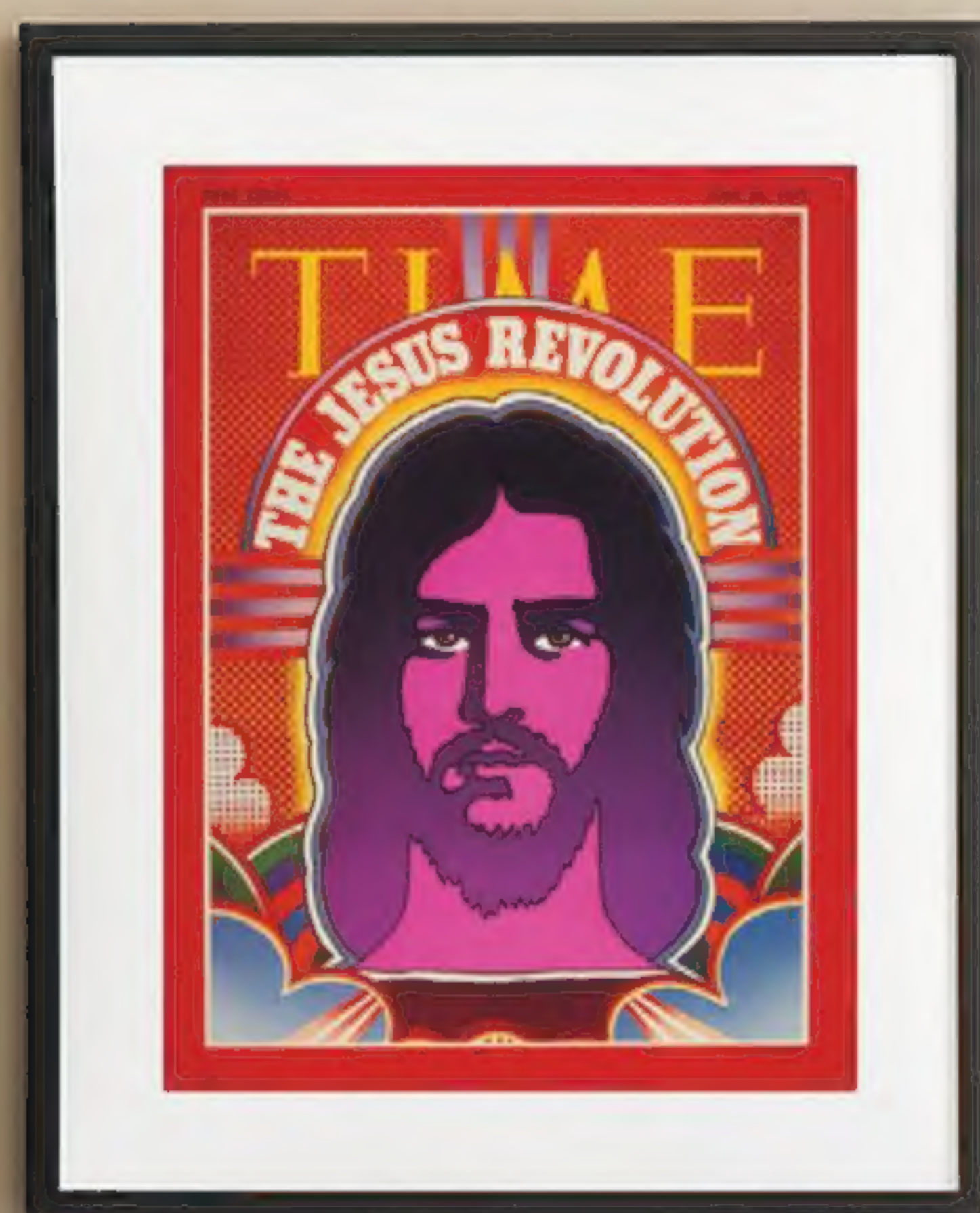
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